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design to gain the honour that cometh of men, whatever is done with this view is nothing worth; it is not done unto the Lord; he accepteth it not; "ye have no reward for this of your Father which is in heaven."

3. "Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have praise of men." The word *synagogue* does not here mean a place of worship, but any place of public resort, such as the Market-place, or Exchange. It was a common thing among the Jews, who were men of large fortunes, particularly among the Pharisees, to cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the most public parts of the city, when they were about to give any considerable alms. The pretended reason for this was, to call the poor together to receive it: but the real design, that they might have praise of men. But be not thou like unto them. Do not thou cause a trumpet to be sounded before thee. Use no ostentation in doing good. Aim at the honour which cometh from God only. *They* who seek the praise of men, *have their reward.* They shall have no praise of God.

4. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." This is a proverbial expression, the meaning of which is, do it in as secret a manner as is possible; as secret as is consistent with the doing it at all; (for it must not be left undone: omit no opportunity of doing good, whether secretly or openly;) and with the doing it in the most effectual manner. For here is also an exception to be made. When you are fully persuaded in your own mind, that by your not concealing the good which is done, either you will yourself be enabled, or others excited to do the more good, then you may not conceal it: then let your light appear, and "shine to all that are in the house." But, unless where the glory of God, and the good of mankind, oblige you to the contrary, act in as private and unobserved a manner as the nature of the thing will admit; "that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee

openly." Perhaps, in the present world, many instances of this stand recorded in all ages; but infallibly in the world to come, before the general assembly of men and angels.

II. 1. From works of Charity or Mercy, our Lord proceeds to those which are termed works of Piety. "And when thou prayest, (saith he,) thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." Hypocrisy, then, or insincerity, is the first thing we are to guard against in prayer. Beware not to speak what thou dost not mean. Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: all words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever, therefore, thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out thy soul before him. Not *as the hypocrites*, who *love*, or are wont "to pray standing in the synagogues," the Exchange, or market-places, "and in the corners of the streets," wherever the most people are, "that they may be seen of men:" this was the sole design, the motive and end, of the prayers which they there repeated. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They are to expect none from your Father which is in heaven.

2. But it is not only the having an eye to the praise of men, which cuts us off from any reward in heaven; which leaves us no room to expect the blessing of God upon our works, whether of Piety or Mercy. Purity of intention is equally destroyed by a view to any temporal reward whatever. If we repeat our prayers, if we attend the public worship of God, if we relieve the poor, with a view to gain or interest, it is not a whit more acceptable to God, than if it were done with a view to praise. Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of men, for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear to men, an abomination unto the Lord.

3. "But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." There is a time when thou art openly to glorify God, to pray to and praise him in the great congregation. But when thou desirest more largely and more particularly to make thy requests known unto God, whether it be in the evening, or in the morning, or at noon-day, "enter into thy closet and shut the door." Use all the privacy thou canst. (Only leave it not undone, whether thou hast any closet, any privacy, or not. Pray to God, if it be possible, when none seeth but he; but, if otherwise, pray to God.) Thus "pray to thy Father which is in secret:" pour out all thy heart before him. "And thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly."

4. *But when ye pray*, even in secret, *use not vain repetitions as the Heathen do*, Μη Βαττολογησητε. Do not use abundance of words without any meaning. Say not the same thing over and over again; think not the fruit of your prayers depends on the length of them, like the Heathens: for, "they think they shall be heard for their much speaking."

The thing here reproved, is not simply the length, no more than the shortness of our prayers: but, first, length without meaning; the speaking much, and meaning little or nothing: the using (not all repetitions; for our Lord himself prayed thrice, repeating the same words; but, vain repetitions, as the Heathens did, reciting the names of their gods over and over: as they do among Christians, (vulgarly so called;) and not among the Papists only, who say over and over the same string of prayers, without ever feeling what they speak: Secondly, the thinking to be heard for our much speaking, the fancying God measures prayers by their length, and is best pleased with those which contain the most words, which sound the longest in his ears. These are such instances of superstition and folly, as all who are named by the name of Christ, should leave to the Heathens, to them on whom the glorious light of the gospel hath never shined.

5. "Be not ye, therefore, like unto them." Ye who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are thoroughly convinced, "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." So that the end of your praying is not to inform God, as though he knew not your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves, to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependance on him, who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give than you to ask; as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things he has prepared for you.

III. 1. After having taught the true nature and ends of Prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it: even that divine form of prayer, which seems in this place to be proposed by way of pattern, chiefly as the model and standard of all our prayers; "after this manner therefore pray ye." Whereas, elsewhere he enjoins the use of these very words, "He said unto them, when ye pray, say," Luke xi. 2.

2. We may observe, in general, concerning this divine prayer. First, That it contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. There is nothing which we have need to ask of God, nothing which we can ask without offending him, which is not included, either directly or indirectly in this comprehensive form: Secondly, That it contains all we can reasonably or innocently desire; whatever is for the glory of God, whatever is needful or profitable, not only for ourselves, but for every creature in heaven and earth. And, indeed, our prayers are the proper test of our desires; nothing being fit to have a place in our desires which is not fit to have a place in our prayers; what we may not pray for, neither should we desire: Thirdly, That it contains all our duty to God and man: whatsoever things are pure and holy, whatsoever God requires of the children of men, whatsoever is acceptable in his sight, whatsoever it is whereby we may profit our neighbour, being expressed or implied therein.

3. It consists of three parts, the preface, the petitions, and

the doxology, or conclusion. The preface, "Our Father which art in heaven," lays a general foundation for prayer; comprising what we must first know of God, before we can pray, in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us all those tempers, with which we are to approach to God, which are most essentially requisite, if we desire either our prayers or our lives should find acceptance with him.

4. "Our Father." If he is a Father, then he is good; then he is loving to his children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. God is willing to bless; let us ask for a blessing. "Our Father; our Creator; the Author of our being; who raised us from the dust of the earth; who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls. But, if he made us, let us ask and he will not withhold any good thing from the work of his own hands. "Our Father," our Preserver; who, day by day, sustains the life he has given: of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life, and breath, and all things. So much the more boldly let us come to him, and *we* shall "find mercy and grace to help in time of need." Above all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in him: who justifies us "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus:" who hath "blotted out all our sins, and healed all our infirmities; who hath received us for "his own children, by adoption and grace;" and, "because we are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father; who hath begotten us again of incorruptible seed, and created us anew in Christ Jesus." Therefore we know that he heareth us always; therefore we *pray* to him *without ceasing*. We pray, because we love. And "we love him because he first loved us."

5. "Our Father;" not *mine* only who now cry unto him, but *our's* in the most extensive sense. The God and "Father of the spirits of all flesh;" the Father of angels and men: (so the very Heathen acknowledged him to be, Πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·) The Father of the universe, of all the families

both in heaven and earth. Therefore with him there is no respect of persons. He loveth all that he hath made. "He is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." And the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; in them that trust in him through the Son of his Love, knowing they are *accepted through the beloved.* But, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Yea, and all mankind, seeing "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," even to die the death, that they "might not perish, but have everlasting life."

6. "Which art in heaven:" high and lifted up; God over all, blessed for ever. Who sitting on the circle of the heavens, beholdeth all things both in heaven and earth. Whose eye pervades the whole sphere of created being; yea, and of uncreated night: unto whom "known are all his works," and all the works of every creature, not only "from the beginning of the world" (a poor, low, weak translation) but ἀπ' αἰῶνος· from all eternity, from everlasting to everlasting: who constrains the host of heaven, as well as the children of men, to cry out with wonder and amazement, O the depth! "The depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" "Which art in heaven;" the Lord and Ruler of all, superintending and disposing all things: who art the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the blessed and only Potentate: who art strong and girded about with power, doing whatsoever pleaseth thee! The Almighty; for whensoever thou willest, to do is present with thee. "In heaven;" eminently there. Heaven is thy throne, the place where thine honour particularly dwelleth. But not there alone; for thou fillest heaven and earth, the whole expanse of space. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high!

Therefore should we "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence." Therefore should we think, speak, and act, as continually under the eye, in the immediate presence of the Lord, the King.

7. "Hallowed be thy Name." This is the first of the

six petitions, whereof the prayer itself is composed. The Name of God is God himself; the Nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man: it means therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections; his Eternity, particularly signified by his great and incommunicable Name, JEHOVAH, as the apostle John translates it, το Α, και το Ω, αρχη και τελος· ο ων, και ο ην, και ο ερχομενος, "The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; he which is, and which was, and which is to come:" his *fullness of being*, denoted by his other great Name, *I AM THAT I AM!* his Omnipresence; his Omnipotence: who is indeed the only Agent in the material world: all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God: and he is the Spring of Action in every creature, visible and invisible: which could neither act nor exist, without the continued influx and agency of his almighty Power. His Wisdom, clearly deduced from the things that are seen, from the goodly order of the Universe. His Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, discovered to us in the very first line of his written Word, ברא אלהים: literally, *the gods created*, a plural noun joined with a verb of the singular number: as well as in every part of his subsequent Revelations, given by the mouth of all his holy Prophets and Apostles. His essential Purity and Holiness. And, above all, his Love, which is the very brightness of his glory.

In praying that God, or his *Name*, may *be hallowed* or glorified, we pray that he may be known, such as he is, by all that are capable thereof, by all intelligent beings, and with affections suitable to that knowledge: that he may be duly honoured, and feared, and loved, by all in heaven above and in the earth beneath; by all angels and men, whom for that end he has made capable of knowing and loving him to Eternity.

8. "Thy Kingdom come." This has a close connexion with the preceding petition. In order that the Name of God may be hallowed, we pray that his kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, may come. This kingdom then comes to a

particular person, when he "repents and believes the gospel:" when he is taught of God, not only to know himself, but to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. As "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," so it is the kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer's heart: the Lord God Omnipotent then reigneth, when he is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto himself his mighty power, that he may subdue all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

When therefore God shall "give his Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession;" when "all kingdoms shall bow before him, and all nations shall do him service;" when "the mountain of the Lord's house," the Church of Christ, "shall be established in the top of the mountains;" when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved:" then shall it be seen, that "the Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel," appearing to every soul of man, as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. And it is meet for all those who *love his appearing*, to pray that he would hasten the time: that this his kingdom, the kingdom of grace, may come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth; that all mankind receiving him for their King, truly believing in his name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him for ever and ever.

For this also we pray in those words, "Thy Kingdom come:" we pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death,

taking all things into his own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.

Exactly answerable to all this, are those awful words, in the prayer at the burial of the dead; "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom: that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy everlasting glory."

9. "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is the necessary and immediate consequence wherever the kingdom of God is come: wherever God dwells in the soul by faith, and Christ reigns in the heart by love.

It is probable, many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words, are apt to imagine, they are only an expression of, or petition for, resignation: for a readiness to suffer the Will of God, whatsoever it be concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is not what we pray for in this petition, at least, not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passive, as for an active conformity to the Will of God, in saying, "Thy Will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

How is it done by the angels of God in heaven? Those who now circle his throne rejoicing? They do it *willingly;* they love his commandments, and gladly hearken to his words. It is their meat and drink to do his Will; it is their highest glory and joy. They do it *continually;* there is no interruption in their willing service. They rest not day nor night, but employ every hour, (speaking after the manner of men; otherwise our measures of duration, days, and nights, and hours, have no place in eternity,) in fulfilling his commands, in executing his designs, in performing the counsel of his Will. And they do it *perfectly.* No sin, no defect belongs to angelic minds. It is true, "the stars are not pure in his sight," even the morning-stars that sing to-

gether before him. "In his sight," that is in comparison of him, the very angels are not pure. But this does not imply, that they are not pure *in themselves*. Doubtless they are; they are without spot and blameless. They are altogether devoted to his Will, and perfectly obedient in all things.

If we view them in another light, we may observe, the angels of God in heaven, do *all* the Will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is his Will. Again, they do all the Will of God, *as* he willeth, in the manner which pleases him, and no other. Yea, and they do this, only *because* it is his will; for this and no other reason.

10. When therefore we pray, That the "Will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," the meaning is, that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the Will of their Father which is in heaven, as *willingly* as the holy angels: that these may do it *continually* even as they, without any interruption of their willing service: yea, and that they may do it *perfectly;* that "the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his Will, and work in them all that is well pleasing in his sight."

In other words, we pray, That we, and all mankind, may do the whole Will of God in all things; and nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable Will of God. We pray that we may do the whole Will of God as he willeth, in the manner that pleases him: and, lastly, That we may do it, *because* it is his Will: that this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive of whatsoever we think, or whatsoever we speak or do.

11. "Give us this day our daily Bread." In the three former petitions we have been praying for all mankind. We come now more particularly to desire a supply for our own wants. Not that we are directed, even here, to confine our prayer altogether to ourselves: but this, and each of the

following petitions may be used for the whole Church of Christ upon earth.

By *Bread* we may understand all things needful, whether for our souls or bodies: *τα προς ζωην και ευσεβειαν*. *the things pertaining to life and godliness*. We understand not barely the outward bread, which our Lord terms "the meat which perisheth;" but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food "which endureth unto everlasting life." It was the judgment of many of the ancient Fathers, that we are here to understand the sacramental bread also: daily received in the beginning by the whole Church of Christ, and highly esteemed till the love of many waxed cold, as the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.

Our daily Bread. The word we render *daily* has been differently explained by different Commentators. But the most plain and natural sense of it seems to be this, which is retained in almost all translations, as well ancient as modern; what is sufficient for this day; and so for each day as it succeeds.

12. *Give us.* For we claim nothing of right, but only of free mercy. We deserve not the air we breathe, the earth that bears, or the sun that shines upon us. All our desert, we own, is hell. But God loves us freely. Therefore we ask him to *give*, what we can no more *procure* for ourselves than we can *merit* it at his hands.

Not that either the goodness or the power of God is a reason for us to stand idle. It is his Will, that we should use all diligence in all things, that we should employ our utmost endeavours, as much as if our success were the natural effect of our own wisdom and strength. And then, as though we had done nothing, we are to depend on him, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

This Day. For we are to take no thought for the morrow. For this very end has our wise Creator divided life into these little portions of time, so clearly separated from each other; that we might look on every day as a fresh gift

of God, another life, which we may devote to his glory; and that every evening may be as the close of life, beyond which we are to see nothing but eternity.

13. "And forgive us our Trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." As nothing but sin can hinder the bounty of God from flowing forth upon every creature, so this petition naturally follows the former; that all hinderances being removed, we may the more clearly trust in the God of Love, for every manner of thing which is good.

Our Trespasses. The word properly signifies *our debts.* Thus our sins are frequently represented in Scripture: every sin laying us under a fresh debt to God; to whom we already owe, as it were, ten thousand talents. What then can we answer when he shall say, "Pay me that thou owest?" We are utterly insolvent: we have nothing to pay: we have wasted all our substance. Therefore, if he deal with us according to the rigour of his law, if he exact what he justly may, he must command us to be "bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentors."

Indeed we are already bound hand and foot, by the chains of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds, wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But, considered as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts immense and numberless. Well, therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, may we cry unto him, that he would *frankly forgive* us all.

The word translated *forgive*, implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And, if we attain the former, the latter follows of course; if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever, through the free grace of God in Christ, we *receive forgiveness of sins*, we receive likewise "a lot among those who are sanctified, by faith, which is in him." Sin has lost its power: it has no dominion over those who *are under grace*, that is, in favour

with God. As "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," so they are freed from sin as well as from guilt. "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, and they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

14. "As we forgive them that trespass against us." In these words our Lord clearly declares, both on what condition, and in what degree or manner we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us, *if* we forgive, and *as* we forgive others. This is a point of the utmost importance. And our blessed Lord is so jealous, lest at any time we should let it slip out of our thoughts, that he not only inserts it in the body of his prayer, but presently after repeats it twice over. "If," saith he, "ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," ver. 14, 15. Secondly, God forgives us, *as* we forgive others. So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we so far cut short the forgiveness of our own. God cannot clearly and fully forgive us. He may shew us some degree of mercy. But we will not suffer him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities.

In the mean time, while we do not from our hearts forgive our neighbour his trespasses, what manner of prayer are we offering to God whenever we utter these words? We are indeed setting God at open defiance: we are daring him to do his worst. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!" That is, in plain terms, "Do not thou forgive us at all: we desire no favour at thy hands. We pray, that thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that thy wrath may abide upon us." But can you seriously offer such a prayer to God? And hath he not yet cast you quick into hell? O tempt him no longer! Now, even now, by his grace, forgive as you would be forgiven! Now have

compassion on thy fellow-servant, as God hath had, and will have pity on thee.

15. "And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil." *And lead us not into Temptation.* The word translated *temptation* means trial of any kind. And so the English word temptation was formerly taken in an indifferent sense; although now it is usually understood of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses; first, in its general, then in its restrained acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he saith, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried, [or approved of God,] he shall receive the crown of life," chap. i. 12, 13. He immediately adds, taking the word in the latter sense, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust," or *desire*, ἐξελκόμενος, drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe, *and enticed*, caught as a fish with a bait. Then it is, when he is thus *drawn away and enticed*, then he properly *enters into temptation.* Then temptation covers him as a cloud: it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of the snare? Therefore, we beseech God, "not to lead us into temptation," that is, (seeing God *tempteth no Man,*) not to suffer us to be led into it. "But deliver us from Evil:" rather, "—*from the evil One,*" ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Ὁ Πονηρος is unquestionably *the wicked One*, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God by faith, are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them; and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time, but he cannot destroy; for God is on their side, who will not fail, in the end, to "avenge his own elect, that cry unto him, day and night." Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into temptation. Do thou make a way for us to escape, that the wicked One touch us not.

16. The conclusion of this divine prayer, commonly called The Doxology, is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgment of the attributes and works of God. "For thine is the Kingdom;" the sovereign right of all things that are, or ever were created: yea, thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. "The Power:" the executive power whereby thou governest all things in thy everlasting kingdom, whereby thou dost whatsoever pleaseth thee, in all places of thy dominion. "And the Glory;" the praise due from every creature, for thy power, and the mightiness of thy kingdom, and for all thy wondrous works which thou workest from everlasting, and shalt do, world without end, *for ever and ever! Amen!* So be it!

I believe it will not be unacceptable to the serious Reader to subjoin,

A PARAPHRASE

ON

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

1 FATHER of all, whose powerful voice,
Call'd forth this universal frame;
Whose mercies over all rejoice,
Through endless ages still the same:
Thou, by thy Word, upholdest all,
Thy bounteous Love to all is shew'd;
Thou hear'st thy every creature's call,
And fillest every mouth with good.

2 In heaven thou reign'st, enthron'd in light,
Nature's expanse beneath thee spread;
Earth, air, and sea, before thy sight,
And hell's deep gloom are open laid;

Wisdom, and might, and love are thine:
Prostrate before thy face we fall,
Confess thine attributes divine,
And hail Thee Sovereign Lord of All.

3 Thee, Sovereign Lord, let all confess,
That moves in earth, or air, or sky;
Revere thy power, thy goodness bless,
Tremble before thy piercing eye.
All ye who owe to Him your birth,
In praise your every hour employ:
JEHOVAH reigns! Be glad, O earth!
And shout, ye morning-stars, for joy.

4 SON of thy SIRE's eternal love,
Take to thyself thy mighty power;
Let all earth's sons thy mercy prove,
Let all thy bleeding grace adore.
The triumphs of thy love display,
In every heart reign thou alone;
Till all thy foes confess thy sway,
And glory ends what grace begun.

5 SPIRIT of Grace, and health, and power,
Fountain of light and love below;
Abroad thine healing influence shower,
O'er all the nations let it flow.
Inflame our hearts with perfect love,
In us the work of faith fulfil;
So not heaven's host shall swifter move
Than we on earth to do thy will.

6 Father, 'tis thine each day to yield
Thy children's wants a fresh supply:
Thou cloth'st the lilies of the field,
And hearest the young ravens cry.

On thee we cast our care; we live
  Through thee, who know'st our every need;
O feed us with thy grace, and give
  Our souls this day the living bread.

7 Eternal, spotless LAMB of GOD,
  Before the world's foundation slain,
Sprinkle us ever with thy blood,
  O cleanse and keep us ever clean.
To every soul (all praise to thee!)
  Our bowels of compassion move:
And all mankind by this may see
  God is in us; for God is Love.

8 Giver and LORD of Life, whose power
  And guardian care for all are free;
To thee in fierce temptation's hour,
  From sin and Satan let us flee.
Thine, Lord, we are, and our's thou art,
  In us be all thy goodness shew'd;
Renew, enlarge, and fill our heart
  With peace, and joy, and heaven, and God.

9 Blessing and honour, praise and love,
  Co-equal, Co-eternal THREE,
In earth below, in heaven above,
  By all thy Works be paid to thee.
Thrice holy, thine the kingdom is,
  The power omnipotent is Thine;
And when created nature dies,
  Thy never-ceasing Glories shine.

SERMON XXIX.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW vi. 16—18.

"*Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

"*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;*

"*That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*"

1. IT has been the endeavour of Satan from the beginning of the world, to put asunder what God hath joined together; to separate inward from outward Religion, to set one of these at variance with the other. And herein he has met with no small success, among those who were "ignorant of his devices."

Many, in all ages, having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, have been strictly attached to the "righteousness of the law," the performance of outward duties, but in the mean time wholly regardless of inward righteousness,

"the righteousness which is of God by faith." And many have run into the opposite extreme, disregarding all outward duties, perhaps, even "speaking evil of the law, and judging the law," so far as it enjoins the performance of them.

2. It is by this very device of Satan, that faith and works have been so often set at variance with each other. And many who had a real zeal for God, have, for a time, fallen into the snare on either hand. Some have magnified faith to the utter exclusion of good works, not only from being the cause of our justification (for we know that man is "justified freely by the redemption which is in Jesus") but from being the necessary fruit of it, yea, from having any place in the Religion of Jesus Christ. Others, eager to avoid this dangerous mistake, have run as much too far the contrary way; and either maintained, That good works were the cause, at least the previous condition of justification; or spoken of them as if they were all in all, the whole Religion of Jesus Christ.

3. In the same manner have the end and the means of Religion, been set at variance with each other. Some well-meaning men, have seemed to place all Religion, in attending the prayers of the Church, in receiving the Lord's-supper, in hearing sermons, and reading books of piety: neglecting, mean time, the end of all these, The love of God and their neighbour. And this very thing has confirmed others in the neglect, if not contempt of the ordinances of God, so wretchedly abused, to undermine and overthrow the very end they were designed to establish.

4. But of all the means of grace there is scarce any concerning which men have run into greater extremes, than that of which our Lord speaks in the above mentioned words, I mean, religious fasting. How have some exalted this beyond all Scripture and Reason! And others utterly disregarded it! As it were, revenging themselves, by undervaluing, as much as the former had overvalued it. Those have spoken of it, as if it were all in all; if not the end itself, yet infallibly connected with it: these, as if it

were a fruitless labour, which had no relation at all thereto. Whereas it is certain the truth lies between them both. It is not all; nor yet is it nothing. It is not the end, but it is a precious mean thereto; a mean which God himself has ordained; and in which therefore, when it is duly used, he will surely give us his blessing.

In order to set this in the clearest light, I shall endeavour to shew, First, What is the nature of Fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof: Secondly, What are the reasons, grounds, and ends of it: Thirdly, How we may answer the most plausible objections against it: and, Fourthly, In what manner it should be performed.

I. 1. I shall endeavour to shew, First, What is the nature of Fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof. As to the nature of it, all the inspired Writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word, to fast, in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food. This is so clear, that it would be labour lost, to quote the words of David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and the Prophets that followed, or of our Lord and his Apostles; all agreeing in this, that, to fast, is not to eat for a time prescribed.

2. To this, other circumstances were usually joined by them of old, which had no necessary connexion with it. Such were the neglect of their apparel, the laying aside those ornaments which they were accustomed to wear: the putting on mourning, the strewing ashes upon their head, or wearing sackcloth next their skin. But we find little mention made in the New Testament, of any of these indifferent circumstances. Nor does it appear, that any stress was laid upon them, by the Christians of the purer ages; however some penitents might voluntarily use them, as outward signs of inward humiliation. Much less did the Apostles, or the Christians cotemporary with them, beat or tear their own flesh. Such discipline as this, was not unbecoming the Priests or worshippers of Baal. The gods of the Heathens were but devils; and it was, doubtless acceptable to their devil-god, when his Priests, (1 Kings xviii. 28;) "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, till

the blood gushed out upon them:" but it cannot be pleasing to Him, nor become his followers, who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

3. As to the degrees or measures of fasting, we have instances of some who have fasted several days together. So Moses, Elijah, and our blessed Lord, being endued with supernatural strength for that purpose, are recorded to have fasted without intermission, "forty days and forty nights." But the time of fasting more frequently mentioned in Scripture, is one day, from morning till evening. And this was the fast commonly observed among the ancient Christians. But beside these, they had also their half fasts, (Semijejunia, as Tertullian stiles them) on the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) throughout the year; on which they took no sustenance till three in the afternoon, the time when they returned from the public service.

4. Nearly related to this, is what our Church seems peculiarly to mean by the term *Abstinence:* which may be used when we cannot fast entirely, by reason of sickness or bodily weakness. This is the eating little; the abstaining in part; the taking a smaller quantity of food than usual. I do not remember any scriptural instance of this. But neither can I condemn it. For the Scripture does not: it may have its use, and receive a blessing from God.

5. The lowest kind of fasting, if it can be called by that name, is the abstaining from pleasant food. Of this, we have several instances in Scripture, besides that of Daniel and his brethren, who from a peculiar consideration, namely, that they might "not defile themselves with the portions of the King's meat, nor with the wine which he drank," (a daily provision of which the King had appointed for them) *requested* and obtained of *the Prince of the Eunuchs, pulse to eat and water to drink*, Dan. iv. 5, &c. Perhaps from a mistaken imitation of this, might spring the very ancient custom, of abstaining from flesh and wine, during such times as were set apart for fasting and abstinence. If it did not rather arise from a supposition, that these were

the most pleasant food, and a belief, that it was proper to use what was least pleasing, at those times of solemn approach to God.

6. In the Jewish Church, there were some stated fasts. Such was the fast of the seventh month, appointed by God himself to be observed by all Israel, under the severest penalty. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, On the tenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement; and ye shall afflict your souls—to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For, whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people," Lev. xxiii. 26, &c. In after ages, several other stated fasts were added to these. So mention is made by the Prophet Zechariah, of the fast, not only "of the seventh, but also of the fourth, of the fifth, and of the tenth month," chap. viii. 19.

In the ancient Christian Church there were likewise stated fasts, and those both annual and weekly. Of the former sort was that before Easter; observed by some for eight and forty hours; by others, for an entire week; by many, for two weeks, taking no sustenance till the evening of each day. Of the latter, those of the fourth and sixth days of the week, observed, (as Epiphanius writes, remarking it as an undeniable fact,) εν ολη τη οικουμενη· *in the whole habitable earth*, at least, in every place where any Christians made their abode. The annual fasts in our Church are, "The forty days of Lent, the Ember days at the four seasons, the Rogation days, and the Vigils or Eves of several solemn festivals: the weekly, all Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day."

But, beside those which were fixed, in every nation fearing God, there have always been occasional fasts, appointed from time to time, as the particular circumstances and occasions of each required. So, when "the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, came against Jehoshaphat to battle; Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah," 2 Chron. xx. 1—3. And so, "in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah,

in the ninth month," when they were afraid of the King of Babylon, the Princes of "Judah proclaimed a fast before the Lord, to all the people of Jerusalem," Jer. xxxvi. 9.

And, in like manner, particular persons, who take heed unto their ways, and desire to walk humbly and closely with God, will find frequent occasion for private seasons of thus afflicting their souls, before their Father who is in secret. And it is to this kind of fasting, that the directions here given, do chiefly and primarily refer.

II. 1. I proceed to shew, in the second place, What are the grounds, the reasons, and ends of Fasting.

And, first, men who are under strong emotions of mind, who are affected with any vehement passion, such as sorrow or fear, are often swallowed up therein, and even *forget to eat their bread.* At such seasons they have little regard for food, not even what is needful to sustain nature; much less for any delicacy or variety, being taken up with quite different thoughts. Thus, when Saul said, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me;" it is recorded, "He had eaten no bread, all the day, nor all the night," 1 Sam. xxviii. 15—20. Thus those who were in the ship with St. Paul, "when no small tempest lay upon them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, continued fasting, having taken nothing," Acts xxvii. 33; no regular meal, for fourteen days together. And thus "David, and all the men that were with him, [when they heard that,] the people were fled from the battle, and that many of the people were fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son were dead also; mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul and Jonathan, and for the house of Israel," 2 Sam. i. 12.

Nay, many times they, whose minds are deeply engaged, are impatient of any interruption, and even loathe their needful food, as diverting their thoughts from what they desire should engross their whole attention. Even as Saul, when on the occasion mentioned before, he had "fallen all along upon the earth, and there was no strength in him, yet said,

I will not eat, till his servants, together with the women, compelled him."

2. Here then is the natural ground of fasting. One, who is under deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, would, without any rule, without knowing or considering, whether it were a command of God or not, "forget to eat his bread," abstain, not only from pleasant, but even from needful food. Like St. Paul, who, after he was "led into Damascus, was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink," Acts ix. 9.

Yea, when the storm rose high, when "a horrible dread overwhelmed" one who had long been without God in the world; his soul would "loathe all manner of meat;" it would be unpleasing and irksome to him. He would be impatient of any thing that should interrupt his ceaseless cry, "Lord, save! or I perish!"

How strongly is this expressed by our Church in the first part of the Homily on Fasting:

"When men feel in themselves the heavy burthen of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold, with the eye of their mind, the horror of hell; they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart; and cannot but accuse themselves, and open their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied [taken up] partly with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid apart, and loathsomeness [or loathing] of all worldly things and pleasure, cometh in place. So that nothing then liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and behaviour of body to shew themselves weary of life."

3. Another reason or ground of fasting is this: many of those who now fear God, are deeply sensible how often they have sinned against him, by the abuse of these lawful things. They know how much they have sinned by excess of food; how long they have transgressed the holy law of

God, with regard to temperance, if not sobriety too: how they have indulged their sensual appetities, perhaps to the impairing even their bodily health; certainly to the no small hurt of their souls. For hereby they continually fed and increased that sprightly folly, that airiness of mind, that levity of temper, that gay inattention to things of the deepest concern, that giddiness and carelessness of spirit, which were no other than drunkenness of soul, which stupified all their noblest faculties, no less than excess of wine or strong drink. To remove, therefore, the effect, they remove the cause: they keep at a distance from all excess. They abstain, as far as is possible, from what had well nigh plunged them into everlasting perdition. They often wholly refrain; always take care to be sparing and temperate in all things.

4. They likewise well remember, how fulness of bread increased not only carelessness and levity of spirit, but also foolish and unholy desires, yea, unclean and vile affections. And this experience puts beyond all doubt. Even a genteel, regular sensuality, is continually sensualizing the soul, and sinking it into a level with the beasts that perish. It cannot be expressed what an effect variety and delicacy of food have on the mind as well as the body; making it just ripe for every pleasure of sense, as soon as opportunity shall invite. Therefore, on this ground also, every wise man will refrain his soul, and keep it low: will wean it more and more from all those indulgences of the inferior appetites, which naturally tend to chain it down to the earth, and to pollute as well as debase it. Here is another perpetual reason for fasting; to remove the food of lust and sensuality, to withdraw the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, of vile and vain affections.

5. Perhaps we need not altogether omit (although I know not if we should do well, to lay any great stress upon it) another reason for fasting, which some good men have largely insisted on: namely, the punishing themselves for having abused the good gifts of God, by some times wholly refraining from them: thus exercising a kind of holy re-

venge upon themselves, for their past folly and ingratitude, in turning the things which should have been for their health, into an occasion of falling. They suppose David to have had an eye to this when he said, "I wept and chastened [or punished] my soul with fasting:" and St. Paul, when he mentions *what revenge* godly sorrow occasioned in the Corinthians.

6. A fifth, and more weighty reason for fasting is, that it is a help to prayer; particularly, when we set apart larger portions of time for private prayer. Then especially it is, that God is often pleased to lift up the souls of his servants above all the things of earth, and sometimes to wrap them up, as it were, into the third heavens. And it is chiefly, as it is a help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found a mean in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing, not one virtue, not chastity only, (as some have idly imagined, without any ground, either from Scripture, Reason, or Experience,) but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility, and tenderness of conscience; deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God and every holy and heavenly affection.

7. Not that there is any natural or necessary connection between fasting and the blessings God conveys thereby. But he will have mercy *as* he will have mercy: he will convey whatsoever seemeth him good, by whatsoever mean he is pleased to appoint. And he hath, in all ages, appointed this, to be a mean of averting his wrath, and obtaining whatever blessings we, from time to time, stand in need of.

How powerful a mean this is, to avert the wrath of God, we may learn from the remarkable instance of Ahab. *There was none like him, who did sell himself;* wholly give himself up, like a slave, bought with money, *to work wickedness.* Yet, when he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and went softly: the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days."

It was for this end, to avert the wrath of God, that Daniel

sought God, "with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." This appears from the whole tenor of his prayer, particularly from the solemn conclusion of it. "O Lord, according to all thy righteousnesses [or mercies] let thy anger be turned away from thy holy mountain.—Hear the prayer of thy servant, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate.—O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, for thine own sake," Dan. ix. 3, 16, &c.

8. But it is not only from the people of God that we learn, when his anger is moved, to seek him by fasting and prayer; but even from the Heathens. When Jonah had declared, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them unto the least. For the King of Nineveh arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor stock, taste any thing. Let them not feed, nor drink water." (Not that the beast had sinned, or could repent; but that, by their example, man might be admonished, considering that for his sin, the anger of God was hanging over all creatures.) "Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" And their labour was not in vain. The fierce anger of God was turned away from them. "God saw their works," (the fruits of that repentance and faith, which he had wrought in them by his Prophet;) "and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not." Jonah iii. 4, &c.

9. And it is a mean not only of turning away the wrath of God, but also of obtaining whatever blessings we stand in need of. So when the other tribes were smitten before the Benjamites, "all the children of Israel went up unto the house of the Lord, and wept and fasted that day until even;" and then the Lord said, "Go up again; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand," Judges xx. 26, &c. So Samuel gathered all Israel together, when they were in bon-

dage to the Philistines, " and they fasted on that day before the Lord: and when the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, the Lord thundered upon them with a great thunder, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel," 1 Sam. vii. 6. So Ezra: " I proclaimed a fast at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones; and he was entreated of us," Ezra viii. 24. So Nehemiah; " I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." And God granted him mercy in the sight of the King, Nehem. i. 4—11.

10. In like manner, the Apostles always joined fasting with prayer, when they desired the blessing of God on any important undertaking. Thus we read, Acts xiii, " There were in the Church that was at Antioch certain Prophets and Teachers: as they ministered to the Lord and fasted," (doubtless for direction in this very affair,) " the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had" (a second time) " fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away," ver. 1—3.

Thus also Paul and Barnabas themselves, as we read in the following chapter, when they " returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples; and when they had ordained them Elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, commended them to the Lord," ver. 23.

Yea, that blessings are to be obtained in the use of this mean, which are no otherwise attainable, our Lord expressly declares in his answer to his disciples, asking, " Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit, this kind (of devils) goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting," Matt. xvii. 19, &c.; these being the appointed means of attain-

ing that faith, whereby the very devils are subject unto you.

11. These were the *appointed* means. For it was not merely by the light of reason, or of natural conscience, as it is called, that the people of God have been, in all ages, directed to use fasting as a mean to these ends. But they have been, from time to time, taught it of God himself, by clear and open revelations of his will. Such is that remarkable one by the Prophet Joel, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Turn you unto me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.—Who knoweth, if the Lord will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:—Then will the Lord be jealous over his land, and will spare his people. Yea, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil.—I will no more make you a reproach among the Heathen," ch. ii. 12, &c.

Nor are they only temporal blessings which God directs his people to expect in the use of these means. For, at the same time that he promised to those who should seek him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, "I will restore to you the years which the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army," he subjoins, "So shall ye eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God.—Ye shall also know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God." And then immediately follows the great gospel-promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids, in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

12. Now whatsoever reasons there were to quicken those of old, in the zealous and constant discharge of this duty, they are of equal force still to quicken us. But above all these, we have a peculiar reason for being *in fastings often*, namely, the command of Him by whose name we are called. He does not, indeed, in this place, *expressly* enjoin, either

fasting, giving alms, or prayer. But his directions how to fast, to give alms, and to pray, are of the same force with such injunctions. For the commanding us to do any thing *thus*, is an unquestionable command, to do that thing; seeing it is impossible to perform it *thus*, if it be not performed *at all*. Consequently, the saying, Give alms, pray, fast, in *such a manner*, is a clear command to perform all those duties: as well as to perform them in that *manner*, which shall, in no wise, lose its reward.

And this is a still farther motive and encouragement to the performance of this duty; even the promise which our Lord has graciously annexed to the due discharge of it: "thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Such are the plain grounds, reasons, and ends of fasting; such is our encouragement to persevere therein, notwithstanding abundance of objections which men, wiser than their Lord, have been continually raising againt it!

III. 1. The most plausible of these, I come now to consider. And, first, It has been frequently said, "Let a Christian fast from sin, and not from food: this is what God requires at his hands. So he does; but he requires the other also. Therefore this ought to be done, and that not left undone.

View your argument in its full dimensions; and you will easily judge of the strength of it.

"If a Christian ought to abstain from sin, then he ought not to abstain from food:

But a Christian ought to abstain from sin:

Therefore, he ought not to abstain from food."

That a Christian ought to abstain from sin, is most true. But how does it follow from hence that he ought not to abstain from food? Yea, let him do both the one and the other. Let him, by the grace of God, always abstain from sin; and let him often abstain from food, for such reasons and ends as Experience and Scripture plainly shew to be answered thereby.

2. "But is it not better (as it has, secondly, been objected) to abstain from pride and vanity, from foolish and

hurtful desires, from peevishness, and anger, and discontent, than from food?" Without question it is. But here again we have need to remind you of our Lord's words, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." And, indeed, the latter is only in order to the former; it is a mean to that great end. We abstain from food with this view, that, by the grace of God, conveyed into our souls, through this outward mean, in conjunction with all the other channels of his grace which he hath appointed, we may be enabled to abstain from every passion and temper, which is not pleasing in his sight. We refrain from the one, that, being endued with power from on high, we may be able to refrain from the other. So that your argument proves just the contrary to what you designed. It proves, that we ought to fast. For, if we ought to abstain from evil tempers and desires, then we ought thus to abstain from food: since these little instances of self-denial, are the ways God hath chosen, wherein to bestow that great salvation.

3. "But we do not find it so in fact: (this is a third objection.) We have fasted much and often. But what did it avail? We were not a whit better: we found no blessing therein. Nay, we have found it an hinderance rather than a help. Instead of preventing anger, for instance, or fretfulness, it has been a mean of increasing them to such a height, that we could neither bear others nor ourselves." This may, very possibly, be the case. It is possible, either to fast or pray, in such a manner, as to make you much worse than before; more unhappy, and more unholy. Yet the fault does not lie in the mean itself, but in the *manner* of using it. Use it still, but use it in a different manner. Do what God commands *as* he commands it, and then, doubtless, his promise shall not fail; his blessing shall be withheld no longer: but, "when thou fastest in secret, he that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

4. "But is it not mere superstition, (so it has been, fourthly, objected,) to imagine that God regards such little things as these?" If you say it is, you condemn all the generations of God's children. But, will you say, these were

all weak, superstitious men? Can you be so hardy as to affirm this, both of Moses and Joshua, of Samuel and David, of Jehosaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the Prophets? Yea, of a greater than all, the Son of God himself? It is certain, both our Master, and all these his servants, did imagine, that fasting is not a little thing, and that he who is higher than the highest doth regard it. Of the same judgment, it is plain, were all his Apostles, after they were "filled with the Holy Ghost, and with wisdom." When "they had the unction of the Holy One, teaching them all things," they still approved themselves the Ministers of God, by fastings, as well as by the "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." After "the bridegroom was taken from them, then did they fast in those days." Nor would they attempt any thing (as we have seen above) wherein the glory of God was nearly concerned, such as the sending forth labourers into the harvest, without solemn fasting as well as prayer.

5. "But, if fasting be indeed of so great importance, and attended with such a blessing, is it not best, say some, fifthly, to fast always? Not to do it now and then, but to keep a continual fast? To use as much abstinence, at all times, as our bodily strength will bear?" Let none be discouraged from doing this. By all means use as little and plain food, exercise as much self-denial herein at all times as your bodily strength will bear. And this may conduce, by the blessing of God, to several of the great ends above mentioned. It may be a considerable help, not only to chastity but also to heavenly-mindedness; to the weaning your affections from things below, and setting them on things above. But this is not fasting, scriptural fasting: it is never termed so in all the Bible. It, in some measure, answers some of the ends thereof; but, still it is another thing. Practise it by all means; but not so as thereby to set aside a command of God, and an instituted mean of averting his judgments, and obtaining the blessings of his children.

6. Use continually then as much abstinence as you please;

which, taken thus, is no other than Christian temperance. But this need not at all interfere with your observing solemn times of fasting and prayer. For instance; your habitual abstinence or temperance would not prevent your fasting in secret, if you were suddenly overwhelmed with huge sorrow and remorse, and with horrible fear and dismay. Such a situation of mind would almost constrain you to fast: you would loath your dainty food: you would scarcely endure even to take such supplies, as were needful for the body; till God "lifted you up out of the horrible pit, and set your feet upon a rock, and ordered your goings." The same would be the case if you were in agony of desire, vehemently wrestling with God for his blessing. You would need none to instruct you, not to eat bread, till you had obtained the request of your lips.

7. Again, had you been at Nineveh when it was proclaimed throughout the city, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed or drink water, but let them cry mightily unto God:" would your continual fast have been any reason for not bearing part in that general humiliation? Doubtless it would not. You would have been as much concerned as any other not to taste food on that day.

No more would abstinence, or the observing a continual fast, have excused any of the children of Israel, from fasting on the tenth day of the seventh month, the great annual day of atonement. There was no exception for these in that solemn decree, "Whatsoever soul it shall be, that shall not be afflicted," (shall not fast) "in that day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

Lastly, Had you been with the brethren in Antioch, at that time when they fasted and prayed, before the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul, can you possibly imagine that your temperance or abstinence would have been a sufficient cause for not joining therein? Without doubt, if you had not, you would soon have been cut off from the Christian community. You would have deservedly been cast out

from among them, "as bringing confusion into the church of God."

IV. 1. I am, in the last place, to shew, in what manner we are to fast, that it may be an acceptable service unto the Lord. And, first, Let it be done *unto the Lord*, with our eye singly fixed on him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father that is in heaven: to express our sorrow and shame, for our manifold transgressions of his holy law: to wait for an increase of purifying grace, drawing our affections to things above: to add seriousness and earnestness to our prayers: to avert the wrath of God, and to obtain all the great and precious promises, which he hath made to us in Christ Jesus.

Let us beware of mocking God, of turning our fast, as well as our prayers, into an abomination unto the Lord, by the mixture of any temporal view, particularly by seeking the praise of men. Against this our blessed Lord more peculiarly guards us in the words of the text. "Moreover, when ye fast, be ye not as the hypocrites," such were too many who were called the people of God, "of a sad countenance;" sour, affectedly sad, putting their looks into a peculiar form. "For they disfigure their faces," not only by unnatural distortions, but also by covering them with dust and ashes: "That they may appear unto men to fast:" This is their chief, if not only design. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;" even the admiration and praise of men. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face." Do as thou art accustomed to do at other times; "That thou appear not unto men to fast," let this be no part of thy intention: if they know it without any desire of thine, it matters not, thou art neither the better nor the worse, "but unto thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

2. But, if we desire this reward, let us beware, secondly, of fancying we *merit* any thing of God by our fasting. We cannot be too often warned of this; inasmuch as a desire to *establish our own righteousness*, to procure salvation of *debt* and not of *grace*, is so deeply rooted in all our hearts: fast-

ing is only a way which God hath ordained, wherein we wait for his *unmerited* mercy; and wherein, without any desert of ours, he hath promised *freely* to give us his blessing.

3. Not that we are to imagine the performing the bare outward act will receive any blessing from God. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen, (saith the Lord:) a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" Are these outward acts, however strictly performed, all that is meant by a man's "afflicting his soul?—Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" No surely. If it be a mere external service, it is all but lost labour. Such a performance may possibly afflict the body. But, as to the soul, it profiteth nothing.

4. Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against; for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength. For we may not offer God murder for sacrifice, or destroy our bodies to help our souls.

But at these solemn seasons, we may, even in great weakness of body, avoid that other extreme, for which God condemns those who of old expostulated with him for not accepting their fasts. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?—Behold in the day of your fast you find pleasure, saith the Lord." If we cannot wholly abstain from food, we may, at least, abstain from *pleasant* food; and then we shall not seek his face in vain.

5. But let us take care to afflict our souls as well as our bodies. Let every season, either of public or private fasting, be a season of exercising all those holy affections, which are implied in a broken and contrite heart. Let it be a season of devout mourning, of godly sorrow for sin: such a sorrow as that of the Corinthians, concerning which the Apostle saith, "I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: For ye were made sorry after a

godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow" (η κατα Θεον λυπη) the sorrow which is according to God, which is a precious gift of his Spirit, lifting the soul to God from whom it flows, "worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Yea, and let our sorrowing after a godly sort, work in us the same inward and outward repentance; the same entire change of heart, renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; and the same change of life, till we are holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation. Let it work in us the same *carefulness*, to be found in him, without spot and blameless; the same *clearing of ourselves*, by our lives rather than words, by our abstaining from all appearance of evil; the same *indignation*, vehement abhorrence of every sin; the same *fear* of our own deceitful hearts: the same *desire* to be in all things conformed to the holy and acceptable will of God; the same *zeal* for whatever may be a mean of his glory, and of our growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: and the same *revenge* against Satan and all his works, against all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 9, &c.

6. And with fasting let us always join fervent prayer, pouring out our whole souls before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, laying open before him all our wants, all our guiltiness and helplessness. This is a season for enlarging our prayers, both in behalf of ourselves and of our brethren. Let us now bewail the sins of our people, and cry aloud for the city of our God: that the Lord may build up Zion, and cause his face to shine on her desolations. Thus we may observe the men of God, in ancient times, always joined prayer and fasting together. Thus the Apostles in all the instances cited above: and thus our Lord joins them in the discourse before us.

7. It remains only, in order to our observing such a fast as is acceptable to the Lord, that we add alms thereto; works of mercy, after our power, both to the bodies and souls of men. "With such sacrifices also God is well pleased."

Thus the angel declares to Cornelius, fasting and praying in his house, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God," Acts x. 4. And this God himself expressly and largely declares, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.—If [when thou fastest] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make thy bones fat: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not," Isa. lviii. 6, &c.

SERMON XXX.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW VI. 19—23.

"*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

"*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

"*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

"*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

"*But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*"

1. FROM those which are commonly termed Religious Actions, and which are real Branches of true Religion, where they spring from a pure and holy intention, and are performed in a manner suitable thereto, our Lord proceeds to the actions of *common life*, and shews that the same purity of intention, is as indispensably required in our ordinary business, as in giving alms, or fasting, or prayer.

And without question, the same purity of intention, "which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must

also make our labour or employment, a proper offering to God. If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be *seen*, or prays that he may be *heard* of men. For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. They are not only evil when they mix with our good works, with our religious actions, "but they have the same evil nature when they enter into the common business of our employments. If it were allowable to pursue them in our worldly employments, it would be allowable to pursue them in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a pure intention, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him, but when it is performed with the same piety of heart."

2. This our blessed Lord declares in the liveliest manner, in those strong and comprehensive words which he explains, enforces, and enlarges upon, throughout this whole chapter. "The light of the body is the eye. If therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The eye is the intention: what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single, when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design, but to "know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:" to know him with suitable affections, loving him as he hath loved us: to please God in all things: to serve God (as we love him) with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength: and to enjoy God in all,—and above all things, in time and in eternity.

3. "If thine eye be *thus* single," *thus* fixed on God, "thy whole body shall be full of light." "Thy whole body,"—All that is guided by the intention, as the body is by

the eye. All thou art: all thou dost: thy desires, tempers, affections; thy thoughts, words, and actions. The whole of these "shall be full of light:" full of true divine knowledge. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. "In his light thou shalt see light. He who of old commanded light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart." He shall enlighten the eyes of thy understanding, with the knowledge of the glory of God. His Spirit shall reveal unto thee, the deep things of God. The inspiration of the Holy One shall give thee understanding, and cause thee to know wisdom secretly. Yea, *the anointing* which thou receivest of him, "shall abide in thee, and teach thee of all things."

How does experience confirm this? Even after God hath opened the eyes of our understanding, if we seek or desire any thing else than God, how soon is our foolish heart darkened! Then clouds again rest upon our souls. Doubts and fears again overwhelm us. We are tossed to and fro, and know not what to do, or which is the path wherein we should go. But when we desire and seek nothing but God, clouds and doubts vanish away. We "who were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord." The night now shineth as the day: and we find, "the path of the upright is light." God sheweth us the path wherein we should go, and maketh plain the way before our face.

4. The second thing which we may here understand by *Light*, is holiness. While thou seekest God in all things, thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy, and truth. While thou lookest unto Jesus and him alone, thou shalt be filled with the mind that was in him. Thy soul shall be renewed day by day, after the image of him that created it. If the eye of thy mind be not removed from him, if thou endurest "seeing him that is invisible," and seeking nothing else in heaven or earth, then as thou beholdest the glory of the Lord, "thou shalt be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

And it is also matter of daily experience, that "by grace we are *thus* saved through faith." It is by faith that the eye of the mind is opened, to see the light of the glorious love of God. And as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, we are more and more filled with the love of God and man; with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering; with all the fruits of holiness which are through Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father.

5. This light which fills him who has a single eye, implies, thirdly, Happiness as well as holiness. Surely "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to see the sun." But how much more to see the Sun of Righteousness, continually shining upon the soul! And if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any peace that passeth all understanding, if any rejoice in hope of the glory of God, they all belong to him whose eye is single. Thus is his "whole body full of light." He walketh in the light as God is in the light, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks, *enjoying* whatever is the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus.

6. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." "If thine eye be evil:" we see there is no medium between a single and an evil eye. If the eye be not single, then it is evil. If the intention, in whatever we do, be not singly to God, if we seek any thing else, then our "mind and conscience are defiled."

Our eye therefore is evil, if in any thing we do, we aim at any other end than God; if we have any view, but to know and to love God, please and serve him in all things: if we have any other design than to enjoy God, to be happy in him both now and for ever.

7. If thine eye be not singly fixt on God, "thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The veil shall still remain on thy heart. Thy mind shall be more and more blinded, by "the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon thee." Thou wilt be full of ignorance and error touching the things of God, not

being able to receive or discern them. And even when thou hast some desire to serve God, thou wilt be full of uncertainty as to the manner of serving him; finding doubts and difficulties on every side, and not seeing any way to escape.

Yea, if thine eye be not single, if thou seek any of the things of earth, thou shalt be full of ungodliness and unrighteousness: thy desires, tempers, affections, being all out of course, being all dark, and vile, and vain. And thy conversation will be evil, as well as thy heart, not "seasoned with salt," nor "meet to minister grace unto the hearers;" but idle, unprofitable, corrupt, grievous to the Holy Spirit of God.

8. Both "destruction and unhappiness are in thy ways; for the way of peace hast thou not known." There is no peace, no settled, solid peace, for them that know not God. There is no true, nor lasting content for any, who do not seek him with their whole heart. While thou aimest at any of the things that perish, "all that cometh is vanity." Yea, not only vanity, but "vexation of spirit," and that both in the pursuit and the enjoyment also. Thou walkest indeed in a vain shadow, and disquietest thyself in vain. Thou walkest in darkness that may be felt. *Sleep on;* but thou canst not *take thy rest.* The dreams of life can give pain, and that thou knowest: but ease they cannot give. There is no rest in this world or in the world to come, but only in God, the centre of spirits.

"If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If the intention which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge, and love, and peace, and which in fact, does so as long as it is single, as long as it aims at God alone: if this be darkness; if it aim at any thing beside God, and consequently cover the soul with darkness, instead of light, with ignorance and error, with sin and misery: O how great is that darkness! It is the very smoke which ascends out of the bottomless pit! It is the essential night, which reigns in the lowest deep, in the land of the shadow of death.

9. Therefore, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." If you do, it is plain your eye is evil: it is not singly fixed on God.

With regard to most of the commandments of God, whether relating to the heart or life, the Heathens of Africa or America, stand much on a level, with those that are called Christians. The Christians observe them (a few only being excepted) very near as much as the Heathens. For instance: The generality of the natives of England, commonly called Christians, are as sober and as temperate, as the generality of the Heathens near the Cape of Good Hope. And so the Dutch or French Christians, are as humble and as chaste, as the Choctaw or Cherokee Indians. It is not easy to say, when we compare the bulk of nations in Europe, with those in America, whether the superiority lies on the one side or the other. At least, the American has not much the advantage. But we cannot affirm this, with regard to the command now before us. Here the Heathen has far the pre-eminence. He desires and seeks nothing more than plain food to eat, and plain raiment to put on. And he seeks this only from day to day. He reserves, he lays up nothing; unless it be, as much corn at one season of the year, as he will need before that season returns. This command, therefore, the heathens, though they know it not, do constantly and punctually observe. They "lay up for themselves no treasure upon earth;" no stores of purple or fine linen,—of gold or silver, which either "moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal." But how do the Christians observe what they profess to receive, as a command of the most high God? Not at all; not in any degree; no more than if no such command had ever been given to man. Even the good Christians, as they are accounted by others as well as themselves, pay no manner of regard thereto. It might as well be still hid in its original Greek, for any notice they take of it. In what Christian city do you find one man of five hundred, who makes the least scruple, of laying up just as much treasure as he can?

Of increasing his goods just as far as he is able? There are indeed those who would not do this unjustly; there are many who will neither rob nor steal; and some, who will not defraud his neighbour; nay, who will not gain, either by his ignorance or necessity. But this is quite another point. Even these do not scruple the thing, but the manner of it. They do not scruple the "laying up treasures upon earth;" but the laying them up by dishonesty. They do not start at disobeying Christ, but at a breach of Heathen morality. So that even these honest men do no more obey this command, than a highwayman or a house-breaker. Nay, they never designed to obey it. From their youth up, it never entered into their thoughts. They were bred up by their Christian parents, masters, and friends, without any instruction at all concerning it: unless it were this, To break it as soon, and as much as they could, and to continue breaking it to their live's end.

10. There is no one instance of spiritual infatuation in the world, which is more amazing than this. Most of these very men read, or hear the Bible read, many of them every Lord's-day. They have read, or heard these words a hundred times, and yet never suspect that they are themselves condemned thereby, any more than by those which forbid parents to offer up their sons or daughters unto Moloch. O that God would speak to these miserable self-deceivers, with his own voice, his mighty voice! That they may at last awake out of the snare of the devil, and the scales may fall from their eyes!

11. Do you ask what it is to "lay up treasures on earth?" It will be needful to examine this thoroughly. And let us, first, observe, what is not forbidden in this command, that we may then clearly discern, what is.

We are not forbidden in this command, first, to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," to provide wherewith we may "render unto all their due, whatsoever they can justly demand of us. So far from it, that we are taught of God, to "owe no man any thing." We ought therefore to use all diligence in our calling, in order to owe no

man any thing: this being no other than a plain law of common justice, which our Lord came "not to destroy, but to fulfil."

Neither, secondly, does he here forbid the providing for ourselves, such things as are needful for the body; a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on. Yea, it is our duty, so far as God puts it into our power, to provide these things also; to the end we may "eat our own bread, and be burdensome to no man."

Nor yet are we forbidden, thirdly, to provide for our children, and for those of our own household. This also it is our duty to do, even upon principles of heathen morality. Every man ought to provide the plain necessaries of life, both for his own wife and children; and to put them into a capacity of providing these for themselves, when he is gone hence, and is no more seen. I say, of providing *these*, the plain necessaries of live, not delicacies, not superfluities: and that by their *diligent labour;* for it is no man's duty to furnish them, any more than himself, with the means either of luxury or idleness. But if any man provide not thus far for his own children, (as well as for *the widows of his own house;* of which primarily St. Paul is speaking, in those well-known words to Timothy:) *He hath* practically *denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, or heathen.

Lastly. We are not forbidden in these words, to lay up from time to time, what is needful for the carrying on our worldly business, in such a measure and degree, as is sufficient to answer the foregoing purposes: in such a measure, as first, to owe no man any thing; secondly, to procure for ourselves the necessaries of life; and thirdly, to furnish those of our own house with them while we live, and with the means of procuring them when we are gone to God.

12. We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what that is which is forbidden here. It is, The designedly procuring more of this world's goods, than will answer the foregoing purposes: the labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase of

gold and silver; the laying up any more than these ends require, is what is here expressly and absolutely forbidden. If the words have any meaning at all, it must be this; for they are capable of no other. Consequently, whoever he is, that owing no man any thing, and having food and raiment for himself and his household, together with a sufficiency to carry on his worldly business, so far as answers these reasonable purposes: whoever, I say, being already in these circumstances, seeks a still larger portion on earth, he lives in an open, habitual denial of the Lord that bought him. He hath practically *denied the faith, and is worse than an* African or American *infidel.*

13. Hear ye this, all ye that dwell in the world, and love the world wherein ye dwell. Ye may be "highly esteemed of men;" but ye are "an abomination in the sight of God." How long shall your souls cleave to the dust? How long will ye load yourselves with thick clay? When will ye awake and see, that the open, speculative Heathens are nearer the kingdom of heaven than you? When will ye be persuaded to choose the better part; that which cannot be taken away from you? When will ye seek only to "lay up treasures in heaven," renouncing, dreading, abhorring all other? If you aim at "laying up treasures on earth," you are not barely losing your time, and spending your strength for that which is not bread: for what is the fruit, if you succeed? You have murdered your own soul. You have extinguished the last spark of spiritual life therein. Now indeed, in the midst of life, you are in death. You are a living man, but a dead Christian. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Your heart is sunk into the dust: your soul cleaveth to the ground. Your affections are set, not on things above, but on things of the earth; on poor husks that may poison, but cannot satisfy an everlasting spirit, made for God. Your love, your joy, your desire are all placed on the things which perish in the using. You have thrown away the treasures in heaven: God and Christ are lost. You have gained riches and hell-fire.

14. O "how hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God!" When our Lord's disciples were astonished at his speaking thus, he was so far from retracting it, that he repeated the same important truth, in stronger terms than before. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." How hard is it for them, whose every word is applauded, not to be wise in their own eyes! How hard for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men! How hard not to seek happiness in their riches, or in things dependent upon them; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life! O ye rich, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Only with God, all things are possible.

15. And even if you do not succeed, what is the fruit of your endeavouring to lay up treasures on earth? "They that will be rich," (οι βυλομενοι πλυτειν, they that desire, that endeavour after it, whether they succeed or not,) "fall into a temptation and a snare," a gin, a trap of the devil, "and into many foolish and hurtful lusts;" επιθυμιας ανοητυς, desires with which reason hath nothing to do; such as properly belong, not to rational and immortal beings, but only to the brute-beasts, which have no understanding: "which drown men in destruction and perdition," in present and eternal misery. Let us but open our eyes, and we may daily see the melancholy proofs of this: men, who desiring, resolving to be rich, *coveting after money, the root of all evil, have* already *pierced themselves through with many sorrows*, and anticipated the hell to which they are going.

The cautiousness with which the Apostle here speaks, is highly observable. He does not affirm this absolutely of the rich; for a man may possibly be rich, without any fault of his, by an over-ruling Providence, preventing his own choice. But he affirms it of βυλομενοι πλυτειν, *Those who desire*, or seek *to be rich*. Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always "drown men in destruction and perdition."

But the *desire of riches* does: those who calmly desire, and deliberately seek to attain them, whether they do in fact, gain the world or not, do infallibly lose their own souls. These are they, that sell him who bought them with his blood, for a few pieces of gold or silver. These enter into a covenant with death and hell: and their covenant shall stand. For they are daily making themselves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

16. O who shall warn this generation of vipers, to flee from the wrath to come! Not those who lie at their gate or cringe at their feet, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their tables. Not those who court their favour or fear their frown; none of those who mind earthly things. But if there be a Christian upon earth, if there be a man who hath overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and fears none but him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell: thou, O Man of God, speak and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet. Cry aloud, and shew these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand. It may be, one in a thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust; may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.

17. And if it should be, that one of these, by the mighty power of God, awoke and asked, What must I do to be saved? The answer, according to the Oracles of God, is clear, full, and express. God doth not say to thee, "Sell all that thou hast." Indeed he who seeth the hearts of men, saw it needful to enjoin this in one peculiar case, that of the young, rich Ruler. But he never laid it down for a general rule, to all rich men, in all succeeding generations. His general direction is, first, "Be not high-minded." God seeth not as man seeth. He esteems thee not for thy riches, for thy grandeur or equipage, for any qualification or accomplishment, which is directly or indirectly owing to thy wealth, which can be bought, or procured thereby. All these are with him as dung and dross: let them be so with thee also. Beware thou think not thyself to be one jot wiser

or better for all these things. Weigh thyself in another balance; estimate thyself only by the measure of faith and love which God hath given thee. If thou hast more of the knowledge and love of God than he, thou art on this account, and no other, wiser and better, more valuable and honourable than he who is with the dogs of thy flock. But if thou hast not this treasure, thou art more foolish, more vile, more truly contemptible, I will not say, than the lowest servant under thy roof, but than the beggar laid at thy gate, full of sores.

18. Secondly, "Trust not in uncertain riches." Trust not in them for help: and trust not in them for happiness.

First, Trust not in them for help. Thou art miserably mistaken, if thou lookest for this in gold or silver. These are no more able to set thee *above the world*, than to set thee above thee devil. Know that both the world and the prince of this world laugh at all such preparations against them. These will little avail in the day of trouble: even if they remain in the trying hour. But it is not certain, that they will; for how often do they "make themselves wings and fly away!" But if not, what support will they afford, even in the ordinary troubles of life? The desire of thy eyes, the wife of thy youth, thy son, thine only son, or the friend which was as thy own soul, is taken away at a stroke. Will thy riches re-animate the breathless clay, or call back its late inhabitant?—Will they secure thee from sickness, diseases, pain? Do these visit the poor only? Nay, he that feeds thy flocks, or tills thy ground, has less sickness and pain than thou. He is more rarely visited by these unwelcome guests: and if they come there at all, they are more easily driven away from the little cot, than from "the cloud-topt palaces." And during the time that thy body is chastened with pain, or consumes away with pining sickness, how do thy treasures help thee? Let the poor Heathen answer,

"Ut lippum pictæ tabulæ, fomenta podagrum,
Auriculas citharæ collecta sorde dolentes."

19. But there is at hand a greater trouble than all these. *Thou* art to die. *Thou* art to sink into dust; to return to the ground from which thou wast taken, to mix with common clay. *Thy* body is to go to the earth as it was, while thy spirit returns to God that gave it. And the time draws on; the years slide away with a swift though silent pace. Perhaps your day is far spent: the noon of life is past, and the evening shadows begin to rest upon you. You feel in yourselves sure approaching decay. The springs of life wear away apace. Now what help in your riches? Do they sweeten death? Do they endear that solemn hour? Quite the reverse. "O death, how bitter art thou, to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions!" How unacceptable to him is that awful sentence, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee!"—Or will they prevent the unwelcome stroke, or protract the dreadful hour? Can they deliver your soul that it should not see death? Can they restore the years that are past? Can they add to your appointed time, a month, a day, an hour, a moment?—Or will the good things you have chosen for your portion here, follow you over the great gulph? Not so: naked came you into this world; naked must you return.

Linquenda tellus, et domus et placens
Uxor: nec harum quas seris arborum
Te præter invisam cupressum,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.

Surely were not these truths too plain to be *observed*, because they are too plain to be *denied*, no man that is to die could possibly *trust*, for help, *in uncertain riches*.

20. And trust not in them for happiness. For here also they will be found *deceitful upon the weights*. Indeed, this every reasonable man may infer, from what has been observed already. For if neither thousands of gold and silver, nor any of the advantages or pleasures purchased thereby, can prevent our being miserable, it evidently follows, they cannot make us happy. What happiness can they afford to him, who in the midst of all is constrained to cry out,

"To my new Courts sad Thought does still repair,
And round my gilded roof hangs hovering Care."

Indeed experience is here so full, strong, and undeniable, that it makes all other arguments needless. Appeal we therefore to fact. Are the rich and great, the only happy men? And is each of them more or less happy, in proportion to his measure of riches? Are they happy at all? I had well nigh said, they are of all men the most miserable! Rich man, for once, speak the truth from thy heart. Speak both for thyself, and for thy brethren.

"Amidst our plenty something still—
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!
That cruel something unpossest
Corrodes and leavens all the rest."

Yea, and so it will, till thy wearisome days of vanity are shut up in the night of death.

Surely then to trust in riches for happiness, is the greatest folly of all that are under the sun! Are you not convinced of this? Is it possible you should still expect to find happiness in money, or all it can procure? What! Can silver and gold, and eating and drinking, and horses, and servants, and glittering apparel, and diversions and pleasures (as they are called) make thee happy? They can as soon make thee immortal.

21. These are all dead show. Regard them not. *Trust* thou *in the living God.* So shalt thou be safe under the shadow of the Almighty; his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler. He is a very present help in time of trouble; such an help as can never fail. Then shalt thou say, if all thy other friends die, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper!" He shall remember thee when thou liest sick upon thy bed: when vain is the help of man, when all the things of the earth can give no support, he will "make all thy bed in thy sickness." He will sweeten thy pain: the consolations of God shall cause thee to clap thy hands in the flames. And even when this house of earth is well nigh shaken down, when it is just ready to

drop into the dust, he will teach thee to say, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ."

O trust in him for happiness as well as for help. All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust *in him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy*, παρεχοντι πλουσιως παντα εις απολαυσιν. Who, of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that receiving them as his gifts, and as pledges of his love, we may *enjoy all* that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all, while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand, into all he bestows on his thankful children: who having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all, and above all.

22. Thirdly, seek not to *increase in goods*. "Lay not up for thyself treasures upon earth." This is a flat, positive command, full as clear, as, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." How then is it possible for a rich man to grow richer, without denying the Lord that bought him? Yea, how can any man, who has already the necessaries of life, gain or aim at more, and be guiltless? "Lay not up," saith our Lord, "treasures upon earth." If, in spite of this, you do, and will lay up, money or goods, what "moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal:" if you will add house to house, or field to field, why do you call yourself a Christian? You do not obey Jesus Christ. You do not design it. Why do you name yourself by his name? "Why call ye me Lord, Lord," saith he himself, "and do not the things which I say?"

23. If you ask, "But what must we do with our goods, seeing we have more than we have occasion to use, if we must not lay them up? Must we throw them away?" I answer, If you threw them into the sea, if you were to cast them into the fire and consume them, they would be better bestowed than they are now. You cannot find so

mischievous a manner of throwing them away, as either the laying them up for your posterity, or the laying them out upon yourselves, in folly and superfluity. Of all possible methods of *throwing them away*, these two are the very worst; the most opposite to the gospel of Christ, and the most pernicious to your own soul.

How pernicious to your own soul the latter of these is, has been excellently shewn by a late Writer. "If we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, but we do ourselves this farther harm, we turn this useful talent into a powerful mean of corrupting ourselves: because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, which, as Christians, we are obliged to renounce."

"As wit and fine parts cannot be only trifled away, but will expose them that have them to greater follies: so money cannot only be trifled away, but if it be not used according to Reason and Religion, will make people live a more silly and extravagant life, than they would have done without it: if therefore you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You act like one that refuses the cordial to his sick friend, which he cannot drink himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money; if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial. If you spend it upon yourself in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind."

"In using riches where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging foolish passions and supporting a vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our heart. They are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature. They are all of them the support of something, that ought not to be supported. They are contrary

to that piety and sobriety of heart, which relishes divine things. They are so many weights upon our mind, that make us less able and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above."

"So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects: to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, to the making us unable to follow the sublime doctrines of the gospel. It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves."

24. Equally inexcusable are those, who *lay up* what they do not need for any reasonable purposes. "If a man had hands, and eyes, and feet that he could give to those that wanted them; if he should lock them up in a chest, instead of giving them to his brethren, that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with hoarding them up, than entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?"

"Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want it for their necessary uses, we are not far from the cruelty of him, that chooses rather to hoard up the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we choose to lay it up, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness that rather chooses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself for ever blessed by giving to those that want them."

25. May not this be another reason why rich men shall so hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven? A vast majority of them are under a curse, under the peculiar curse of God: inasmuch as in the general tenor of their lives, they are not only robbing God, continually embezzling and wasting their Lord's goods, and by that very mean, corrupting their own souls; but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked; wronging the widow and the fatherless,

and making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction, and distress, which they may, but do not remove. Yea, doth not the blood of all those who perish for want of what they either lay up, or lay out needlessly, cry against them from the earth? O what account will they give, to him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead!

26. The true way of employing what you do not want yourselves, you may, fourthly, learn from those words of our Lord, which are the counterpart of what went before: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Put out whatever thou canst spare, upon better security than this world can afford. Lay up thy treasures in the bank of heaven: and God shall restore them in that day. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again." Place that, saith he, unto my account. Howbeit, "thou owest me thine own self also!"

Give to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart, and write, "So much given to God." For "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

This is the part of *a faithful and wise steward*. Not to sell either his houses or lands, or principal stock, be it more or less, unless some peculiar circumstance should require it; and not to desire or endeavour to increase it, any more than to squander it away in vanity: but to employ it wholly to those wise and reasonable purposes, for which his Lord has lodged it in his hands. The wise steward, after having provided his own household, with what is needful for life and godliness, *makes* himself *friends with* all that remains, from time to time, of the "mammon of unrighteousness; that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting habitations:" that whensoever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they, who were before carried into Abraham's bosom, after having eaten his bread, and worn the fleece of his flock, and praised God for the consolation, may

welcome him into Paradise, and to "the house of God, eternal in the heavens."

27. We "charge you," therefore, "who are rich in this world," as having authority from our great Lord and Master, αγαθοεργειν· *to be habitually doing good*, to live in a course of good works. "Be ye merciful as your Father who is in heaven is merciful," who doth good and ceaseth not. *Be ye merciful*,—"How far?"—*After your power*, with all the ability which God giveth. Make this your only measure of doing good, not any beggarly maxims or customs of the world. We "charge you to be rich in good works;" as you have much, to *give plenteously*. Freely ye have received; freely give; so as to lay up no treasure but in heaven. Be ye "ready to distribute" to every one, according to his necessity. Disperse abroad; give to the poor; deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked with a garment, entertain the stranger, carry or send relief to them that are in prison. Heal the sick; not by miracle, but through the blessing of God upon your seasonable support. Let the blessing of him that was ready to perish, through pining want, come upon thee. Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart to sing for joy.

28. We exhort *you*, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to *be willing to communicate:* κοινωνικους ειναι. To be of the same spirit (though not in the same outward state) with those believers of ancient times, who *remained stedfast*, εν τη κοινωνια, *in* that blessed and holy *fellowship*, wherein "none said, that any thing was his own, but they had all things common." Be a steward, a faithful and wise steward of God, and of the poor; differing from them in these two circumstances only, That your wants are first supplied, out of the portion of your Lord's goods which remain in your hands, and that you have the blessedness of giving. Thus "lay up for yourselves a good foundation," not in the world, which now is, but rather, "for the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life." The great foundation indeed of all the blessings of God, whether tem-

poral or eternal, is the Lord Jesus Christ, his righteousness and blood, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered for us. And "other foundation," in this sense, "can no man lay;" no not an Apostle, no not an Angel from heaven. But through his merits, whatever we do in his Name, is a foundation for a good reward, in the day when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour:" therefore, "labour" thou, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." Therefore, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Therefore, let

> "No fair occasions pass unheeded by;
> Snatching the golden moments as they fly,
> Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity!"

"By patient continuance in well-doing, seek thou for glory, and honour, and immortality." In a constant, zealous performance of all good works, wait thou for that happy hour when *the King shall say*; "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!"

SERMON XXXI.

DISCOURSE IX.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW vi. 24—34.

"*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

"*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

"*Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than they?*

"*Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?*

"*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*

"*And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.*

"*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he*

not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

" *Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

" *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

" *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

" *Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

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1. IT is recorded of the nations, whom the King of Assyria, after he had carried Israel away into captivity, placed in the cities of Samaria, that "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." "These nations," saith the inspired writer, "feared the Lord," performed an outward service to him, (a plain proof that they had a fear of God, though not according to knowledge) "and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children; as did their fathers, so did they unto this day," 2 Kings, xvii, 33, &c.

How nearly does the practice of most modern Christians resemble this of the ancient heathens? "They fear the Lord:" they also perform an outward service to him, and hereby shew, they have some fear of God; but they likewise "serve their own gods." There are those who "teach them" (as there were those who taught the Assyrians) "the manner of the God of the land;" the God whose name the country bears to this day, and who was once worshipped there with an holy worship. "Howbeit," they do not serve him alone; they do not fear him enough for this. But "every nation maketh gods of their own: every nation in the cities wherein they dwell. These nations fear the Lord," they have not laid aside the outward form of worshipping

him. But "they serve their graven images," silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Money, pleasure, and praise, the goods of this world, more than divide their service with the God of Israel. This is the manner both of "their children and their children's children; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

2. But altho', speaking in a loose way, after the common manner of men, those poor heathens were said to "fear the Lord," yet we may observe the Holy Ghost immediately adds, speaking according to the truth and real nature of things, "They fear not the Lord, neither do after the law and commandment, which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob: with whom the Lord made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor serve them.—But the Lord your God ye shall fear, and he shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies."

The same judgment is past, by the unerring Spirit of God, and indeed by all, the eyes of whose understanding he hath opened, to discern the things of God, upon these poor Christians, commonly so called. If we speak according to the truth and real nature of things, "they fear not the Lord, neither do they serve him." For they do not "after the covenant the Lord hath made with them, neither after the law and commandment which he hath commanded them, saying, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." "They serve other gods unto this day." And *no man can serve two masters.*

3. How vain it is for any man to aim at this!—To attempt the serving of two masters. Is it not easy to foresee, what must be the unavoidable consequences of such an attempt? "Either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." The two parts of this sentence, although separately proposed, are to be understood in connexion with each other. For the latter part is a consequence of the former. He will naturally *hold to* him whom he loves. He will so cleave to him, as to perform to him a willing, faithful, and diligent service. And in the mean time, he will so far, at least, *despise* the

master he hates, as to have little regard to his commands, and to obey them, if at all, in a slight and careless manner. Therefore, whatsoever the wise men of the world may suppose, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

4. *Mammon* was the name of one of the heathen gods, who was supposed to preside over riches. It is here understood of riches themselves; gold or silver, or, in general, money: and by a common figure of speech, of all that may be purchased thereby; such as ease, honour, and sensual pleasure.

But what are we here to understand, by *serving God?* And what, by *serving mammon?*

We cannot *serve* God, unless we believe in him. This is the only true foundation of serving him. Therefore, the believing in God, as "reconciling the world to himself thro' Christ Jesus," the believing in him, as a loving, pardoning God, is the first great branch of his service.

And thus to believe in God implies, to *trust* in him as our strength, without whom we can do nothing, who every moment endues us with power from on high, without which, it is impossible to please him: as our help, our only help in time of trouble, who compasseth us about with songs of deliverance; as our shield, our defender, and the lifter up of our head above all our enemies that are round about us.

It implies, to trust in God as our happiness; as the centre of spirits, the only rest of our souls; the only good that is adequate to all our capacities, and sufficient to satisfy all the desires he hath given us.

It implies (what is nearly allied to the other) to trust in God, as our end; to have an eye to him in all things; to use all things only as a mean of enjoying him; wheresoever we are, or whatsoever we do, to see Him that is invisible, looking on us well pleased, and to refer all things to him in Christ Jesus.

5. Thus to believe, is the first thing we are to understand by *serving God.* The second is, To love him.

Now, to love God in the manner the Scripture describes, in the manner God himself requires of us, and by requiring engages to work in us, is to love him as the ONE GOD; that

is, "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength;" it is to desire God alone for his own sake; and nothing else, but with reference to him; to rejoice in God; to delight in the Lord; not only to seek but find happiness in him: to enjoy God as the chief among ten thousand; to rest in him, as our God and our all. In a word, to have such a possession of God, as makes us always happy.

6. A third thing we are to understand by *serving God*, is, To resemble, or imitate him.

So the ancient Father: *Optimus Dei cultus, imitari quem colis.* It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate him you worship.

We here speak, of imitating or resembling him in the spirit of our minds. For here the true Christian imitation of God begins. God is a Spirit; and they that imitate or resemble him, must do it in spirit and in truth.

Now, God is Love. Therefore they who resemble him in the spirit of their minds, are transformed into the same image. They are merciful, even as he is merciful. Their soul is all love. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tender-hearted: and that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Yea, they are, like him, loving unto every man, and their mercy extends to all his works.

7. One thing more we are to understand by *serving God*, and that is, the obeying him; the glorifying him with our bodies, as well as our spirits; the keeping his outward commandments; the zealously doing whatever he hath enjoined, the carefully avoiding whatever he hath forbidden; the performing all the ordinary actions of life, with a single eye and a pure heart; offering them in all holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ.

8. Let us consider now, what we are to understand on the other hand, by *serving mammon*. And, first, it implies, the *trusting* in riches, in money, or the things purchaseable thereby, as our strength, the mean whereby we shall perform, whatever cause we have in hand: the trusting in them

as our help, by which we look to be comforted in, or delivered out of trouble.

It implies, the trusting in the world for happiness; the supposing that "a man's life consisteth" (the comfort of his life) "in the abundance of the things which he possesseth:" the looking for rest in the things that are seen; for content in outward plenty; the expecting that satisfaction in the things of the world, which can never be found out of God.

And if we do this, we cannot but make the world our end; the ultimate end, if not of all, at least of many of our undertakings, many of our actions and designs: in which we shall aim only at an increase of wealth; at the obtaining pleasure or praise; at the gaining a larger measure of temporal things, without any reference to things eternal.

9. The *serving mammon* implies, secondly, Loving the world: desiring it for its own sake; the placing our joy in the things thereof, and setting our hearts upon them: the seeking (what indeed it is impossible we should find) our happiness therein; the resting with the whole weight of our souls, upon the staff of this broken reed; although daily experience shews it cannot support, but will only "enter into our hand and pierce it."

10. To resemble, to be conformed to the world, is a third thing we are to understand by *serving mammon:* to have not only designs, but desires, tempers, affections, suitable to those of the world: to be of an earthly, sensual mind, chained down to the things of earth: to be self-willed, inordinate lovers of ourselves; to think highly of our own attainments; to desire and delight in the praise of men; to fear, shun, and abhor reproach; to be impatient of reproof, easy to be provoked, and swift to return evil for evil.

11. To *serve mammon*, is, lastly, to obey the world, by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs; to walk as other men walk, in the common road, in the broad, smooth, beaten path; to be in the fashion, to follow a multitude; to do like the rest of our neighbours; that is, to do the will of the flesh and the mind, to gratify our appetites

and inclinations; to sacrifice to ourselves; aim at our own ease and pleasure, in the general course both of our words and actions.

Now what can be more undeniably clear, than that we *cannot* thus *serve God and mammon?*

12. Does not every man see, that he cannot *comfortably* serve both? That to trim between God and the world, is the sure way to be disappointed in both, and to have no rest either in one or the other? How uncomfortable a condition must he be in, who having the fear, but not the love of God, who serving him, but not with all his heart, has only the toils and not the joys of religion? He has religion enough to make him miserable, but not enough to make him happy: his religion will not let him enjoy the world; and the world will not let him enjoy God. So that by halting between both he loses both, and has no peace either in God or the world.

13. Does not every man see, that he cannot serve both, *consistently* with himself? What more glaring inconsistency can be conceived, than must continually appear in his whole behaviour, who is endeavouring to obey both these masters, striving to *serve God and mammon?* He is indeed "a sinner that goeth two ways;" one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand, and pulling down with the other. He loves sin, and he hates it: he is always seeking, and yet always fleeing from God. He would and he would not. He is not the same man, for one day, no, not for an hour together. He is a motley mixture of all sorts of contrarieties; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one. O! be consistent with thyself one way or the other. Turn to the right hand or to the left. If *mammon* be God, serve thou him; if the LORD, then serve him. But never think of serving either at all, unless it be with thy whole heart.

14. Does not every reasonable, every thinking man see, that he cannot *possibly serve God and mammon?* Because there is the most absolute contrariety, the most irreconcileable enmity between them. The contrariety between the

most opposite things on earth, between fire and water, darkness and light, vanishes into nothing, when compared to the contrariety between God and mammon. So that, in whatsoever respect you serve the one, you necessarily renounce the other. Do you believe in God thro' Christ? Do you trust in him as your strength, your help, your shield, and your exceeding great reward?—As your happiness?—Your end in all, above all things? Then you cannot *trust* in riches. It is absolutely impossible you should, so long as you have this faith in God. Do you thus *trust in riches?* Then you have denied the faith. You do not trust in the living God. Do you *love* God? Do you seek and find happiness in him? Then you cannot love the world; neither the things of the world. You are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to you. Do you *love the world?* Are your affections set on things beneath? Do you seek happiness in earthly things? Then it is impossible you should love God. Then the love of the Father is not in you. Do you *resemble* God? Are you merciful, as your Father is merciful? Are you transformed by the renewal of your mind, into the image of him that created you? Then you cannot be conformed to the present world. You have renounced all its affections and lusts. Are you conformed to the world? Does your soul still bear the image of the earthly? Then you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind. You do not bear the image of the heavenly. Do you *obey* God? Are you zealous to do his will on earth, as the angels do in heaven? Then it is impossible you should *obey mammon.* Then you set the world at open defiance. You trample its customs and maxims under foot, and will neither follow nor be led by them. Do you follow the world? Do you live like other men? Do you please men? Do you please yourself? Then you cannot be a servant of God. You are of your master and father, the devil.

15. Therefore, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt lay aside all thoughts of obeying two masters, of serving God and Mammon. Thou shalt propose to thyself no end, no help, no happi-

ness, but God. Thou shalt seek nothing in earth or heaven but him: thou shalt aim at nothing, but to know, to love, and enjoy him. And because this is all your business below, the only view you can reasonably have, the one design you are to pursue in all things, "therefore I say unto you," (as our Lord continues his discourse) "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." A deep and weighty direction, which it imports us well to consider, and thoroughly to understand.

16. Our Lord does not here require, that we should be utterly without thought, even touching the concerns of this life. A giddy, careless temper, is at the farthest remove from the whole Religion of Jesus Christ. Neither does he require us to be "slothful in business," to be slack and dilatory therein. This, likewise, is contrary to the whole spirit and genius of his Religion. A Christian abhors sloth as much as drunkenness, and flees from idleness as he does from adultery. He well knows, that there is one kind of thought and care, with which God is well pleased; which is absolutely needful for the due performance of those outward works, unto which the Providence of God has called him.

It is the will of God, that every man should labour to *eat his own bread:* yea, and that every man should provide for his own, for them of his own household. It is likewise his will, that we should "owe no man any thing, but provide things honest in the sight of all men." But this cannot be done, without taking some thought, without having some care upon our minds: yea, often, not without long and serious thought, not without much and earnest care. Consequently, this care, to provide for ourselves and our household, this thought, how to render to all their dues, our blessed Lord does not condemn. Yea, it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

It is good and acceptable to God, that we should so take thought concerning whatever we have in hand, as to have a clear comprehension of what we are about to do, and to plan our business before we enter upon it. And it is righ-

that we should carefully consider, from time to time, what steps we are to take therein; as well as that we should prepare all things before hand, for the carrying it on in the most effectual manner. This care, termed by some, "The care of the head," it was, by no means, our Lord's design to condemn.

17. What he here condemns is, "The care of the heart:" the anxious, uneasy care: the care that hath torment; all such care as does hurt, either to the soul or body. What he forbids is, That care which sad experience shews, wastes the blood, and drinks up the spirits: which anticipates all the misery it fears, and comes to torment us before the time. He forbids only that care, which poisons the blessings of to-day, by fear of what may be to-morrow; which cannot enjoy the present plenty, thro' apprehensions of future want. This care is not only a sore disease, a grievous sickness of soul, but also an heinous offence against God, a sin of the deepest dye. It is an high affront to the gracious Governor and wise Disposer of all things; necessarily implying, that the great Judge does not do right, that he does not order all things well. It plainly implies, That he is wanting, either in wisdom, if he do not know what things we stand in need of: or in goodness, if he do not provide those things, for all who put their trust in him. Beware, therefore, that you take not thought in this sense: be ye anxiously careful for nothing. Take no uneasy thought: this is a plain, sure rule, *Uneasy care* is *unlawful care*. With a single eye to God, do all that in you lies, to provide things honest in the sight of all men. And then give up all into better hands: leave the whole event to God.

18. "Take no thought," of this kind, no uneasy thought even "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" If, then, God gave you life, the greater gift, will he not give you food to sustain it? If he hath given you the body, how can ye doubt, but he will give you raiment to cover it? More especially, if you give yourselves up to him, and

serve him with your whole heart. "Behold," see before your eyes, "the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;" and yet they lack nothing, "yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Ye that are creatures capable of God, are ye not of more account in the eyes of God? Of a higher rank in the scale of beings? "And which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" What profit have you then from this anxious thought? It is every way fruitless and unavailing.

"And why take ye thought for raiment?" Have ye not a daily reproof, wherever you turn your eyes? "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," (is cut down, burnt up, and seen no more,) "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" You, whom he made to endure for ever and ever, to be pictures of his own eternity! Ye are indeed of little faith: otherwise, ye could not doubt of his love and care, no, not for a moment.

19. "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat," if we lay up no treasure upon earth? "What shall we drink," if we serve God with all our strength, if our eye be singly fixed on him? "Wherewithal shall we be clothed," if we are not conformed to the world, if we disoblige those by whom we might be profited? "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," the heathen who know not God. But ye are sensible, "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And he hath pointed out to you an infallible way of being constantly supplied therewith. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

20. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Before you give place to any other thought or care, let it be your concern, That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who "gave his only begotten Son," to the end that "believing in him, ye might not perish, but have everlasting life," may reign in your heart, may manifest himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there: that he may "cast down every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Let God have the sole dominion over you. Let him reign without a rival. Let him possess all your heart, and rule alone. Let him be your one desire, your joy, your love; so that all that is within you may continually cry out, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

"Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the heart. And what is righteousness but love? The love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus Christ, and producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, patience, deadness to the world; and every right disposition of heart, toward God, and toward man. And by these, it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report; whatsoever works of faith and labour of love are acceptable to God and profitable to man.

His righteousness: this is all *his* righteousness still: it is his own free *gift* to us, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, through whom alone it is purchased for us: and it is his *work:* it is he alone that worketh it in us, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit.

21. Perhaps the well observing this, may give light to some other scriptures, which we have not always so clearly understood. St. Paul, speaking in his epistle to the Romans concerning the unbelieving Jews, saith, "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." They were "ignorant of God's righteousness," not only of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to every believer, whereby all his sins are blotted out, and he is reconciled to the favour of God: but (which seems here to be more immediately understood) they were

ignorant of that inward righteousness, of that holiness of heart, which is with the utmost propriety termed, *God's Righteousness*; as being both his own free gift through Christ, and his own work, by his almighty Spirit. And because they were ignorant of this, they "went about to establish their own righteousness." They laboured to establish that outside righteousness, which might very properly be termed *their own*. For neither was it wrought by the Spirit of God, nor was it owned or accepted of him. They might work this themselves, by their own natural strength: and when they had done, it was a stink in his nostrils. And yet trusting in this, they would "not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." Yea, they hardened themselves against that faith, whereby alone it was possible to attain it. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Christ, when he said, *It is finished!* put an end to the law, to the law of external rites and ceremonies, that he might "bring in a better righteousness," through his blood, by that one oblation of himself once offered, even the image of God, into the inmost soul of "every one that believeth."

22. Nearly related to these, are those words of the Apostle, in his epistle to the Philippians. "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ," an entrance into his everlasting kingdom, "and be found in him," [believing in him,] "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."—"Not having my own righteousness which is of the law;" a barely external righteousness, the outside Religion I formerly had, when I hoped to be accepted of God, because I was, "touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless:"—"But that which is through the faith of Christ, that righteousness which is of God by faith:" that holiness of heart, that renewal of the soul, in all its desires, tempers, and affections, "which is of God:" it is the work of God and not of man; "by faith:" through the faith of Christ, through the revelation of Jesus Christ in us, and by faith in his blood;

whereby alone we obtain the remission of our sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

23. *Seek ye first* this *kingdom of God* in your hearts, this *righteousness*, which is the gift and work of God, the image of God renewed in your souls: "and all these things shall be added unto you:" all things needful for the body; such a measure of all, as God sees most for the advancement of his kingdom. These *shall be added*, they shall be thrown in, over and above. In seeking the peace and the love of God, you shall not only find what you more immediately seek, even the kingdom that cannot be moved; but also what you seek not, not at all for its own sake, but only in reference to the other. You shall find in your way to the kingdom all outward things, so far as they are expedient for you: this care God hath taken upon himself: cast you all your care upon him. He knoweth your wants: and whatsoever is lacking, he will not fail to supply.

24. "Therefore, take no thought for the morrow." Not only, take ye no thought, how to lay up treasures on earth, how to increase in worldly substance; take no thought how to procure more food than you can eat, or more raiment than you can put on; or more money than is required from day to day, for the plain reasonable purposes of life: but take no *uneasy* thought, even concerning those things which are absolutely needful for the body. Do not trouble yourself now, with thinking what you shall do at a season which is yet afar off. Perhaps that season will never come: or it will be no concern of your's: before then you will have passed through all the waves, and be landed in eternity. All those distant views do not belong to *you*, who are but a creature of a day. Nay, what have you to do with *the morrow*, more strictly speaking? Why should you perplex yourself without need? God provides for you to-day what is needful to sustain the life which he hath given you. It is enough: give yourself up into his hands: if you live another day, he will provide for that also.

25. Above all, do not make the care of future things a pretence for neglecting present duty. This is the most

fatal way of "taking thought for the morrow." And how common is it among men! Many, if we exhort them to keep a conscience void of offence, to abstain from what they are convinced is evil, do not scruple to reply, "How then must we live? Must we not take care of ourselves and of our families?" And this, they imagine to be a sufficient reason, for continuing in known, wilful sin. They say, and perhaps think, they would serve God now, were it not that they should, by and by, lose their bread. They would prepare for eternity; but they are afraid of wanting the necessaries of life. So they serve the devil for a morsel of bread: they rush into hell, for fear of want; they throw away their poor souls, lest they should, some time or other, fall short of what is needful for their bodies.

It is not strange, that they, who thus take the matter out of God's hand, should be so often disappointed of the very things they seek; that while they throw away heaven, to secure the things of earth, they lose the one, but do not gain the other. The jealous God, in the wise course of his Providence, frequently suffers this. So that they who will not cast their care on God, who taking thought for temporal things, have little concern for things eternal, lose the very portion which they have chosen. There is a visible blast on all their undertakings: whatsoever they do, it doth not prosper. Insomuch, that after they have forsaken God for the world, they lose what they sought, as well as what they sought not. They fall short of the kingdom of God and his righteousness; nor yet are other things added unto them.

26. There is another way of "taking thought for the morrow," which is equally forbidden in these words. It is possible to *take thought* in a wrong manner, even with regard to spiritual things: to be so careful about what may be by and by, as to neglect what is now required at our hands. How insensibly do we slide into this, if we are not continually watching unto prayer? How easily are we carried away, in a kind of waking dream, projecting distant schemes, and drawing fine scenes in our own imagina-

tion! We think, what good we will do, when we are in such a place, or when such a time is come! How useful we will be, how plenteous in good works, when we are easier in our circumstances! How earnestly we will serve God, when once such an hindrance is out of the way!

Or, perhaps, you are now in heaviness of soul: God, as it were, hides his face from you. You see little of the light of his countenance; you cannot taste his redeeming love. In such a temper of mind, how natural is it to say, "O how will I praise God, when the light of his countenance shall be again lifted up upon my soul! How will I exhort others to praise him, when his love is again shed abroad in my heart! Then I will do thus and thus: I will speak for God in all places: I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Then I will redeem the time. I will use to the uttermost every talent I have received." Do not believe thyself. Thou wilt not do it then, unless thou dost it now. "He that is faithful in that which is little," of whatsoever kind it be, whether it be worldly substance, or the fear or love of God, "will be faithful in that which is much." But if thou now hidest one talent in the earth, thou wilt then hide five: that is, if ever they are given; but there is small reason to expect they ever will. Indeed "unto him that hath," that is, uses what he hath, "shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But from him that hath not," that is, uses not the grace which he hath already received, whether in a larger or smaller degree, "shall be taken away even that which he hath."

27. And *take no thought* for the temptations of to-morrow. This also is a dangerous snare. Think not, "When such a temptation comes, what shall I do? how shall I stand? I feel I have not power to resist: I am not able to conquer that enemy." Most true: you have not *now* the power which you do not *now* stand in need of. You are not able at *this time* to conquer that enemy; and at *this time* he does not assault you. With the grace you have now, you could not withstand the temptations which you have not. But when the temptation comes, the grace will come. In greater

trials you will have greater strength. When sufferings abound, the consolations of God will, in the same proportion, abound also. So that in every situation, the grace of God will be sufficient for you. He doth not suffer you "to be tempted" to-day, "above that ye are able to bear." And "in every temptation he will make a way to escape." "As thy day, so thy strength shall be."

28. "Let the morrow," therefore, "take thought for the things of itself;" that is, when the morrow comes, then think of it. Live thou to-day. Be it thy earnest care to improve the present hour. This is your own; and it is your all. The past is as nothing, as though it had never been. The future is nothing to you: it is not your's; perhaps it never will be. There is no depending on what is yet to come; for you "know not what a day may bring forth." Therefore, live to-day: lose not an hour: use this moment: for it is your portion. "Who knoweth the things which have been before him, or which shall be after him under the sun?" The generations, that were from the beginning of the world, where are they now? Fled away: forgotten. They *were*; they lived their day; they were shook off the earth, as leaves from off their trees. They mouldered away into common dust. Another and another race succeeded; then they "followed the generation of their fathers, and shall never more see the light." Now is thy turn upon the earth. "Rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth." Enjoy the very, very now; by enjoying Him, "whose years fail not." Now let thine eye be singly fixed on Him, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Now give him thy heart; now stay thyself on Him: now be thou holy, as He is holy. Now lay hold on the blessed opportunity of doing his acceptable and perfect will. Now "rejoice to suffer the loss of all things, so thou mayest win Christ."

29. Gladly suffer to-day, for his Name's sake, whatsoever he permits this day to come upon thee. But look not at the sufferings of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Evil it is, speaking after the manner of men; whether it be reproach or want, pain or sickness.

But in the language of God, all is blessing: it is a precious balm, prepared by the wisdom of God, and variously dispensed among his children, according to the various sicknesses of their souls. And he gives in one day, sufficient for that day; proportioned to the want and strength of the patient. If, therefore, thou snatchest to-day, what belongs to thee to-morrow; if thou addest this to what is given thee already, it will be more than thou canst bear: this is the way not to heal, but to destroy thy own soul. Take, therefore, just as much as he gives thee to-day: to-day, do and suffer his will. To-day, give up thyself, thy body, soul, and spirit to God, through Christ Jesus: desiring nothing, but that God may be glorified in all thou art, all thou dost, and all thou sufferest: seeking nothing, but to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ, through the eternal Spirit: pursuing nothing, but to love him, to serve him, and to enjoy him at this hour, and to all eternity!

Now unto God the Father, who hath made me and all the world;—unto God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind;—unto God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God: be honour and praise, majesty and dominion, for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

DISCOURSE X.

ON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW VII. 1—12.

"*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

"*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

"*Or, how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

"*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

"*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

"*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

"*For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

"*Or, what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*

"*Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

"*If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*

"*Therefore, all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*"

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1. OUR blessed Lord, having now finished his main design, having first delivered the sum of true Religion, carefully guarded against those glosses of men, whereby they would make the Word of God of none effect: and having next, laid down Rules touching that right Intention, which we are to preserve in all outward actions: now proceeds to point out the main hindrances of this Religion, and concludes all with a suitable application.

2. In the fifth chapter, our great Teacher has fully described inward Religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul, which constitute real Christianity; the tempers contained in that holiness, "without which, no man shall see the Lord;" the affections, which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically, and essentially good, and acceptable to God. In the sixth he hath shewn how all our actions, likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he declares is of no value with God: whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, are, in his sight, of great price.

3. In the former part of this chapter, he points out the most common, and most fatal hindrances of this holiness.

In the latter, he exhorts us by various motives, to break through all, and secure that prize of our high calling.

4. The first hindrance he cautions us against is judging. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Judge not others, that ye be not judged of the Lord, that ye bring not vengeance on your own heads. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again:" a plain and equitable rule, whereby God permits you to determine for yourselves, in what manner he shall deal with you in the judgment of the great day.

5. There is no station of life, nor any period of time, from the hour of our first repenting and believing the gospel, till we are made perfect in love, wherein this caution is not needful for every child of God. For occasions of judging can never be wanting. And the temptations to it are innumerable: many whereof are so artfully disguised, that we fall into the sin, before we suspect any danger. And unspeakable are the mischiefs produced hereby, always to him that judges another: thus wounding his own soul, and exposing himself to the righteous judgment of God: and frequently to those who are judged, whose hands hang down, who are weakened and hindered in their course, if not wholly turned out of the way, and caused to draw back even to perdition. Yea, how often, when this "root of bitterness springs up, are many defiled thereby:" by reason whereof the way of truth itself is evil spoken of, and that worthy name blasphemed whereby we are called.

6. Yet it does not appear, that our Lord designed this caution only, or chiefly for the children of God: but rather for the children of the world, for the men who know not God. These cannot but hear of those, who are not of the world, who follow after the Religion above described; who endeavour to be humble, serious, gentle, merciful, and pure in heart; who earnestly desire such measures of these holy tempers, as they have not yet attained: and wait for them in doing all good to all men, and patiently suffering evil. Whoever go but thus far, cannot be hid, no more than "a

city set upon a hill." And why do not those, who "see their good works, glorify their Father who is in heaven?" What excuse have they, for not treading in their steps? For not imitating their example, and being followers of them, as they are also of Christ? Why, in order to provide an excuse for themselves, they condemn those whom they ought to imitate. They spend their time in finding out their neighbours' faults, instead of amending their own. They are so busied about others going out of the way, that they themselves never come into it at all: at least, never get forward, never go beyond a poor dead form of godliness, without the power.

7. It is to these more especially that our Lord says, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye," the infirmities, the mistakes, the imprudence, the weakness of the children of God; "but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Thou considerest not the damnable impenitence, the satanic pride, the accursed self-will, the idolatrous love of the world, which are in thyself, and which make thy whole life an abomination to the Lord. Above all, with what supine carelessness and indifference art thou dancing over the mouth of hell? And "how then," with what grace, with what decency or modesty, "wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye," the excess of zeal for God, the extreme of self-denial, the too great disengagement from worldly cares and employments, the desire to be day and night in prayer, or hearing the words of eternal life? "And behold a beam is in thine own eye!" Not a mote, like one of these. "Thou hypocrite!" Who pretendest to care for others, and hast no care for thy own soul! Who maketh a show of zeal for the cause of God, when in truth thou neither lovest nor fearest him! "First, cast out the beam out of thine own eye." Cast out the beam of impenitence. Know thyself. See and feel thyself a sinner. Feel, that thy inward parts are very wickedness, that thou art altogether corrupt and abominable, and that the wrath of God abideth on thee. Cast out the beam of pride. Abhor thyself. Sink down as in dust and ashes.

Be more and more little and mean, and base and vile in thine own eyes. Cast out the beam of self-will. Learn what that meaneth, "If any man will come after me, let him renounce himself." Deny thyself, and take up thy cross daily. Let thy whole soul cry out, "I came down from heaven," (for so thou didst, thou never-dying spirit, whether thou knowest it or not) "not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Cast out the beam of love of the world. Love not the world, neither the things of the world. Be thou crucified unto the world, and the world crucified unto thee. Only *use* the world, but *enjoy* God. Seek all thy happiness in him. Above all, cast out the grand beam, that supine carelessness and indifference. Deeply consider, that *one thing is needful*, the one thing which thou hast scarcely ever thought of. Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf! What art thou? A sinner born to die: a leaf driven before the wind: a vapour ready to vanish away: just appearing, and then scattered into air, to be no more seen! See this, "And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Then, if thou hast leisure from the concerns of thy own soul, thou shalt know how to correct thy brother also.

8. But, what is properly the meaning of this word, *judge not?* What is the *judging* which is here forbidden? It is not the same as evil-speaking, although it is frequently joined therewith. Evil-speaking is the relating any thing that is evil, concerning an absent person: whereas *judging* may indifferently refer, either to the absent or the present. Neither does it necessarily imply the speaking at all, but only the *thinking evil* of another. Not that all kind of thinking evil of others, is that *judging* which our Lord condemns. If I see one commit robbery or murder, or hear him blaspheme the Name of God, I cannot refrain from thinking ill of the robber or murderer. Yet this is not evil *judging*: there is no sin in this, nor any thing contrary to tender affection.

9. The thinking of another, in a manner contrary to love,

is that *judging* which is here condemned, and this may be of various kinds. For, first, we may think another to blame when he is not. We may lay to his charge (at least, in our own mind) the things of which he is not guilty: the words which he has never spoken, or the actions which he has never done. Or, we may think his manner of acting was wrong, although, in reality, it was not. And even where nothing can justly be blamed, either in the thing itself, or in the manner of doing it, we may suppose his intention was not good, and so condemn him on that ground; at the same time that he who searches the heart, sees his simplicity and godly sincerity.

10. But we may not only fall into the sin of *judging*, by condemning the innocent, but also, secondly, by condemning the guilty in a higher degree than he deserves. This species of judging is likewise an offence against justice, as well as mercy: and yet such an offence as nothing can secure us from, but the strongest and tenderest affection. Without this, we readily suppose one who is acknowledged to be in fault, to be more in fault than he really is. We undervalue whatever good is found in him. Nay, we are not easily induced to believe, that any thing good can remain in him, in whom we have found any thing that is evil.

11. All this shows a manifest want of that love, which ου λογιζεται κακον, *thinketh no evil:* which never draws an unjust or unkind conclusion from any premises whatsoever. Love will not infer, from a person's once falling into an act of open sin, that he is accustomed so to do, that he is habitually guilty of it: and if he were habitually guilty once, love does not conclude he is so still: much less, that if he be now guilty of this, therefore he is guilty of other sins also. These evil reasonings all pertain to that sinful judging which our Lord here guards us against: and which we are, in the highest degree, concerned to avoid, if we love either God or our own souls.

12. But, supposing we do not condemn the innocent, neither the guilty any farther than they deserve; still we may not be altogether clear of the snare. For there is a

third sort of sinful judging, which is the condemning any person at all, where there is not sufficient evidence. And be the facts we suppose ever so true, yet that does not acquit us. For they ought not to have been supposed, but proved, and till they were, we ought to have formed no judgment: I say, till they were: for neither are we excused, although the facts admit of ever so strong a proof, unless that proof be produced before we pass sentence, and compared with the evidence on the other side. Nor can we be excused, if ever we pass a full sentence, before the accused has spoken for himself. Even a Jew might teach us this, as a mere lesson of justice abstracted from mercy and brotherly love, "Doth our law," says Nicodemus, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?" John xvii. 51. Yea, a Heathen could reply, when the chief of the Jewish nation desired to have judgment against his prisoner, "It is not the manner of the Romans to judge any man, before he that is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him."

13. Indeed we could not easily fall into sinful judging, were we only to observe that rule, which * another of those heathen Romans affirms to have been the measure of his own practice. "I am so far," says he, "from lightly believing every man, or any man's evidence against another, that I do not easily or immediately believe a man's evidence against himself. I always allow him second thoughts, and many times council too." Go, thou who art called a Christian, and do likewise, lest the Heathen rise and condemn thee in that day.

14. But how rarely should we condemn or judge one another, at least, how soon would that evil be remedied, were we to walk by that clear and express rule, which our Lord himself has taught us! "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," (or if thou hear, or believe he hath) "go and tell him of his fault, between him and thee alone." This is the first step thou art to take. "But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or

*Seneca.

witnesses, every word may be established." This is the second step. "If he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church;" either to the Overseers thereof, or to the whole congregation. Thou hast then done thy part. Then think of it no more, but commend the whole to God.

15. But supposing thou hast, by the grace of God, "cast the beam out of thine own eye," and dost now "clearly see the mote or the beam which is in thy brother's eye," yet beware thou dost not receive hurt thyself, by endeavouring to help him. Still "give not that which is holy unto dogs." Do not lightly account any to be of this number. But if it evidently appear, that they deserve the title, then "cast ye not your pearls before swine." Beware of that zeal which is not according to knowledge. For this is another great hindrance in their way, who would be "perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect." They who desire this, cannot but desire that all mankind should partake of the common blessing. And when we ourselves first partake of the heavenly gift, the divine *evidence of things not seen*, we wonder that all mankind do not see the things which we see so plainly, and make no doubt at all but we shall open the eyes of all we have any intercourse with. Hence, we are for attacking all we meet without delay, and constraining them to see, whether they will or not. And by ill success of this intemperate zeal, we often suffer in our own souls. To prevent this spending our strength in vain, our Lord adds this needful caution, (needful to all, but more especially to those who are now warm in their first love:) "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you."

16. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." Beware of thinking, that any deserve this appellation, till there is full and incontestible proof, such as you can no longer resist. But when it is clearly and indisputably proved, that they are unholy and wicked men, not only strangers to, but enemies to God, to all righteousness and true holiness; *Give not that which is holy*, το αγιον, *the holy thing*, empha-

tically so called, unto these. The holy, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, such as were *hid from the ages and generations* of old, and are now made known to us, only by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; are not to be prostituted unto these men, who know not if there be any Holy Ghost. Not indeed that the ambassadors of Christ can refrain from declaring them in the great congregation, wherein some of these may probably be. We must speak, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. But this is not the case with private Christians. They do not bear that awful character: nor are they under any manner of obligation to force these great and glorious truths on them who contradict and blaspheme, who have a rooted enmity against them. Nay, they ought not so to do, but rather to lead them, as they are able to bear. Do not begin a discourse with these, upon remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. But talk with them in their own manner, and upon their own principles. With the rational, honourable, and unjust Epicure, "reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." This is the most probable way to make *Felix tremble*. Reserve higher subjects for men of higher attainments.

17. Neither "cast your pearls before swine." Be very unwilling to pass this judgment on any man. But if the fact be plain and undeniable, if it be clear, beyond all dispute, if the swine do not endeavour to disguise themselves, but rather glory in their shame, making no pretence to purity, either of heart or life, but working all uncleanness with greediness; then *cast* not *ye your pearls before* them. Talk not to them of the mysteries of the kingdom: of the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: which, of consequence, as they have no other inlets of knowledge, no spiritual senses, it cannot enter into their hearts to conceive. Tell not them of the exceeding great and precious promises, which God hath given us in the Son of his Love. What conception can they have, of being made partakers of the divine nature, who do not even desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust? Just as much know-

ledge as swine have of pearls, and as much relish as they have for them, so much relish have they for the deep things of God, so much knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, who are immersed in the mire of this world, in worldly pleasures, desires, and cares. O! cast not those pearls before these, lest they trample them under their feet, lest they utterly despise what they cannot understand, and speak evil of the things which they know not. Nay, it is probable, this would not be the only inconvenience which would follow. It would not be strange, if they were, according to their nature, to turn again, and rend you: if they were to return you evil for good, cursing for blessing, and hatred for your good-will. Such is the enmity of the carnal mind, against God and all the things of God. Such is the treatment you are to expect from these, if you offer them the unpardonable affront, of endeavouring to save their souls from death, to pluck them as brands out of the burning!

18. And yet you need not utterly despair even of these, who, for the present, turn again and rend you. For, if all your arguments and persuasives fail, there is yet another remedy left, and one that is frequently found effectual, when no other method avails; this is—Prayer. Therefore, whatever you desire or want, either for others or for your own soul, "Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The neglect of this is a third grand hindrance of holiness. Still we "have not, because we ask not." O! how meek and gentle, how lowly in heart, how full of love both to God and man, might ye have been at this day, if you had only asked! If you had continued instant in prayer! Therefore now, at least, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." *Ask*, that ye may thoroughly experience and perfectly practise the whole of that Religion, which our Lord has here so beautifully described. It shall then be given you, to be holy as he is holy, both in heart and in all manner of conversation. *Seek*, in the way he hath ordained, in searching the Scriptures, in hearing his word, in meditating thereon, in fasting, in partaking of the Supper of the Lord, and surely ye shall find,

Ye shall find the pearl of great price, that faith which overcometh the world, that peace which the world cannot give, that love which is the earnest of your inheritance. *Knock:* continue in prayer, and in every other way of the Lord. Be not weary or faint in your mind. Press on to the mark. Take no denial. Let him not go until he bless you. And the door of mercy, of holiness, of heaven, shall be opened unto you.

19. It is in compassion to the hardness of our heart, so unready to believe the goodness of God, that our Lord is pleased to enlarge upon this head, and to repeat and confirm what he hath spoken. "For every one," saith he, "that asketh, receiveth:" so that none need come short of the blessing: "and he that seeketh," even every one that seeketh "findeth," the love and the image of God: "and to him that knocketh," to every one that knocketh, the gate of righteousness shall be opened. So that here is no room for any to be discouraged, as tho' they might ask, or seek, or knock in vain. Only remember, always to pray, to seek, to knock, and not to be faint. And then the promise standeth sure. It is firm as the pillars of heaven. Yea, more firm; for heaven and earth shall pass away; but his Word shall not pass away.

20. To cut off every pretence for unbelief, our blessed Lord, in the following verses, illustrates, yet farther, what he had said, by an appeal to what passes in our own breasts. "What man," saith he, "is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Will even natural affection permit you to refuse the reasonable request of one you love? "Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Will he give him hurtful, instead of profitable things? So that even from what you feel and do yourselves, you may receive the fullest assurance, as, on the one hand, that no ill effect can possibly attend your asking, so, on the other, that it will be attended with that good effect, a full supply of all your wants. For, "if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven," who is

pure, unmixed, essential goodness, "give good things to them that ask him?" Or, (as he expresses it on another occasion) "give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him?" In him are included all good things; all wisdom, peace, joy, love: the whole treasures of holiness and happiness: all that God hath prepared for them that love him.

21. But that your prayer may have its full weight with God, see that ye be in charity with all men. For otherwise, it is more likely to bring a curse than a blessing on your own head: nor can you expect to receive any blessing from God, while you have not charity towards your neighbour. Therefore, let this hindrance be removed without delay. Confirm your love towards one another, and towards all men. And love them, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would, that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets."

22. This is that royal law, that golden rule of Mercy, as well as Justice, which, even the Heathen Emperor caused to be written over the gate of his palace: a rule, which many believe to be naturally engraven on the minds of every one that comes into the world. And thus much is certain, that it commends itself, as soon as heard, to every man's conscience and understanding: insomuch that no man can knowingly offend against it, without carrying his condemnation in his own breast.

23. "This is the Law and the Prophets." Whatsoever is written in that law which God of old revealed to mankind; and whatsoever precepts God has given, by his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began, they are all summed up in those few words, they are all contained in this short direction. And this, rightly understood, comprises the whole of that Religion which our Lord came to establish upon earth.

24. It may be understood, either in a positive or negative sense. If understood in a negative sense, the meaning is, 'Whatever ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye unto them.' Here is a plain rule, always ready at

hand, always easy to be applied. In all cases relating to your neighbour, make his case your own. Suppose the circumstances to be changed, and yourself to be just as he is now. And then beware that you indulge no temper or thought, that no word pass out of your lips, that you take no step which you should have condemned in him, upon such a change of circumstances. If understood in a direct and positive sense, the plain meaning of it is, 'Whatsoever you could reasonably desire of him, supposing yourself to be in his circumstances, that do, to the uttermost of your power, to every child of man.'

25. To apply this in one or two obvious instances. It is clear to every man's own conscience, we would not that others should judge us, should causelessly or lightly think evil of us. Much less would we that any should speak evil of us, should publish our real faults or infirmities. Apply this to yourself. Do not unto another what you would not he should do unto you; and you will never more judge your neighbour, never causelessly or lightly think evil of any one. Much less will you speak evil; you will never mention even the real fault of an absent person, unless so far as you are convinced, it is absolutely needful, for the good of other souls.

26. Again: we would that all men should love and esteem us, and behave toward us, according to justice, mercy, and truth. And we may reasonably desire, that they should do us all the good they can do, without injuring themselves: yea, that in outward things, (according to the known rule,) their superfluities should give way to our conveniencies, their conveniencies to our necessities, and their necessities to our extremities. Now, then, let us walk by the same rule: let us do unto all, as we would they should do to us. Let us love and honour all men. Let Justice, Mercy, and Truth, govern all our minds and actions. Let our superfluities give way to our neighbour's conveniencies: (and who then will have any superfluities left?) Our conveniencies to our neighbour's necessities, our necessities to his extremities.

27. This is pure and genuine morality. This do and

thou shalt live. "As many as walk by this rule, Peace be to them and Mercy:" for they are "the Israel of God." But then be it observed, none can walk by this rule, (nor ever did from the beginning of the world) none can love his neighbour as himself, unless he first love God. And none can love God, unless he believe in Christ, unless he have redemption through his blood, and the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Faith, therefore, is still the root of all, of present, as well as future salvation. Still we must say to every sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thou shalt be saved now, that thou mayest be saved for ever; saved on earth, that thou mayest be saved in heaven. Believe in him, and thy faith will work by love. Thou wilt love the Lord thy God, because he hath loved thee: thou wilt love thy neighbour as thyself. And then it will be thy glory and joy, to exert and increase this love, not barely by abstaining from what is contrary thereto, from every unkind thought, word, and action, but by shewing all that kindness to every man, which thou wouldst he should shew unto thee.

SERMON XXXIII.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW VII. 13, 14.

"*Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*
"*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*"

OUR Lord, having warned us of the dangers which easily beset us at our first entrance upon real Religion, the hindrances which naturally arise from within, from the wickedness of our own hearts: now proceeds to apprise us of the hindrances from without, particularly ill example and ill advice. By one or the other of these, thousands who once ran well, have drawn back unto perdition: yea, many of those who were not novices in Religion, who had made some progress in righteousness. His caution, therefore, against these he presses upon us, with all possible earnestness, and repeats again and again, in variety of expressions, lest by any means we should let it slip. Thus, effectually to guard us against the former, "Enter ye in," saith he, "at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and

broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it." To secure us from the latter, "Beware," saith he, "of false prophets." We shall, at present, consider the former only.

2. "Enter ye in," saith our blessed Lord, "at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

3. In these words we may observe, first, The inseparable properties of the way to hell: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat;" secondly, The inseparable properties of the way to heaven: "Strait is that gate, and few there be that find it;" thirdly, A serious exhortation grounded thereon, "Enter ye in at the strait gate."

I. 1. We may observe, first, The inseparable properties of the way to hell. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat."

2. Wide indeed is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction. For sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction. And how wide a gate is that of sin! How broad is the way of wickedness! The *Commandment of God is exceeding broad*, as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that rises in our heart. And sin is equally broad with the commandment, seeing any breach of the commandment is sin. Yea, rather, it is a thousand times broader: since there is only one way of keeping the commandment: for we do not properly keep it, unless both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumstances are right. But there are a thousand ways of breaking every commandment: so that this gate is wide indeed.

3. To consider this a little more particularly. How wide

do those parent sins extend, from which all the rest derive their being! That carnal mind, which is enmity against God, pride of heart, self-will, and love of the world? Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, on a close and faithful examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness, continually springing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an offspring do they bring forth, in every age and nation! Even enough to cover the whole earth with darkness *and cruel habitations.*

4. O! who is able to reckon up their accursed fruits? To count all the sins, whether against God or our neighbour, not which imagination might paint, but which may be matter of daily, melancholy experience? Nor need we range over all the earth to find them. Survey any one kingdom, any single country, or city, or town, and how plenteous is this harvest! And let it not be one of those, which are still overspread with Mahometan or Pagan darkness: but of those which name the name of Christ, which profess to see the light of his glorious gospel. Go no farther than the kingdom to which we belong, the city wherein we are now. We call ourselves Christians; yea, and that of the purest sort; we are Protestants; reformed Christians! But, alas! who shall carry on the re ormation of our opinions into our hearts and lives? Is there not a cause? For how innumerable are our sins! And those of the deepest dye! Do not the grossest abominations of every kind, abound among us from day to day? Do not sins of every sort cover the land, as the waters cover the sea? Who can count them? Rather go and count the drops of rain, or the sands on the sea-shore. So "wide is the gate," so "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction."

5. *And many there be that go in at* that gate; many who walk in that way. Almost as many as go in at the gate of death, as sink into the chambers of the grave. For it can-

not be denied, (though neither can we acknowledge it but with shame and sorrow of heart,) that even in this, which is called a Christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day, live in sin; or in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe: yea, in some outward transgression, some gross, visible kind of ungodliness or unrighteousness; some open violation of their duty, either to God or man. These then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to destruction. Add to these, those who *have a name* indeed *that they live*, but were never yet alive to God: those that outwardly appear fair to men, but are inwardly full of all uncleanness: full of pride, or vanity;—of anger, or revenge;—of ambition, or covetousness: lovers of themselves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These, indeed, may be highly esteemed of men; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will these saints of the world, swell the number of the children of hell! Yea, add all, whatever they be in other respects, whether they have more or less of the form of godliness, who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness," as the ground of their reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, of consequence have not "submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now all these things joined together in one, how terribly true is our Lord's assertion, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat!"

6. Nor does this only concern the vulgar herd, the poor, base, stupid part of mankind. Men of eminence in the world, men who have many fields and yoke of oxen, do not desire to be excused from this. On the contrary, *many wise men after the flesh*, according to the human methods of judging, *many mighty*, in power, in courage, in riches, many *noble are called:* called into the broad way, by the

world, the flesh, and the devil; and they are not disobedient to that calling. Yea, the higher they are raised in fortune and power, the deeper do they sink into wickedness. The more blessings they have received from God, the more sins do they commit: using their honour or riches, their learning or wisdom, not as means of working out their salvation, but rather of excelling in vice, and so insuring their own destruction.

II. 1. And the very reason why many of these go on so securely in the *broad way*, is, because it is broad: not considering that this is the inseparable property of the way to destruction. "Many there be," saith our Lord, "who go in thereat:" for the very reason why they should flee from it: even "because strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

2. This is an inseparable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, unto life everlasting; so strait is the gate, that nothing unclean, nothing unholy can enter. No sinner can pass through the gate, until he is saved from all his sins. Not only from his outward sins; from his evil "conversation by tradition from his fathers." It will not suffice, that he hath "ceased to do evil," and "learned to do well." He must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all evil and useless discourse; but inwardly changed, thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind. Otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory.

3. For "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life:" the way of universal holiness. Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit, the way of holy mourning: the way of meekness, and that of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Narrow is the way of mercifulness, of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart; of doing good unto all men, and of gladly suffering evil, all manner of evil for righteousness' sake.

4. "And few there be that find it." Alas! how few find even the way of heathen honesty! How few are there, that do nothing to another, which they would not another

should do unto them! How few, that are clear before God, from acts either of injustice or unkindness! How few, that do not *offend with their tongue;* that speak nothing unkind, nothing untrue! What a small proportion of mankind, are innocent even of outward transgressions! And how much smaller a proportion have their hearts right before God! Clean and holy in his sight! Where are they, whom his all-searching Eye discerns to be truly humble? To abhor themselves in dust and ashes, in the presence of God their Saviour? To be deeply and steadily serious, feeling their wants, and "passing the time of their sojourning with fear?" Truly meek and gentle, never "overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good?" Thoroughly athirst for God, and continually panting after a renewal in his likeness? How thinly are they scattered over the earth, whose souls are enlarged in love to all mankind! And who love God with all their strength, who have given him their hearts, and desire nothing else in earth or heaven! How few are those lovers of God and man, that spend their whole strength in doing good unto all men! and are ready to suffer all things, yea, death itself, to save one soul from eternal death!

5. But, while so few are found in the way of life, and so many in the way of destruction, there is great danger, lest the torrent of examples should bear us away with them. Even as a single example, if it be always in our sight, is apt to make much impression upon us: especially when it has nature on its side; when it falls in with our own inclinations. How great then must be the force of so numerous examples, continually before our eyes; and all conspiring together with our own hearts, to carry us down the stream of nature! How difficult must it be, to stem the tide, and to keep ourselves "unspotted in the world!"

6. What heightens the difficulty still more is, that they are not the rude and senseless part of mankind, at least not these alone, who set us the example, who throng the downward way: but the polite, the well-bred, the genteel, the wise, the men who understand the world: the men of

knowledge, of deep and various learning, the rational, the eloquent! These are all, or nearly all, against us. And how shall we stand against these? Do not their tongues drop manna? And have they not learnt all the art of soft persuasion? And of reasoning too: for these are versed in all controversies and strife of words. It is, therefore, a small thing with them to prove, that the way is *right*, because it is *broad:* that he who follows a multitude, cannot do evil, but only he who will not follow them: that your way must be *wrong*, because it is *narrow:* and because there are so few that find it. These will make it clear to a demonstration, that evil is good, and good is evil: that the way of holiness is the way of destruction, and the way of the world, the only way to heaven.

7. O how can unlearned and ignorant men, maintain their cause against such opponents! And yet these are not all with whom they must contend, however unequal to the task. For there are many mighty, and noble, and powerful men, as well as wise, in the road that leadeth to destruction. And these have a shorter way of confuting, than that of reason and argument. They usually apply, not to the understanding, but to the fears of any that oppose them. A method that seldom fails of success, even where argument profits nothing: as lying level to the capacities of all men: for all can fear, whether they can reason or not. And all who have not a firm trust in God, a sure reliance both on his power and love, cannot but fear to give any disgust to those, who have the power of the world in their hands. What wonder, therefore, if the example of these is a law, to all who know not God?

8. Many rich are likewise in the broad way. And these apply to the hopes of men, and to all their foolish desires, as strongly and effectually, as the mighty and noble to their fears. So that hardly can you hold on in the way of the kingdom, unless you are dead to all below, unless you are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you, unless you desire nothing more but God.

9. For how dark, how uncomfortable, how forbidding

is the prospect on the opposite side! A strait gate! A narrow way! And few finding that gate! Few walking in the way! Besides, even those few, are not wise men, not men of learning or eloquence. They are not able to reason either strongly or clearly: they cannot propose an argument to any advantage. They know not how to prove what they profess to believe; or to explain even what they say they experience. Surely such advocates as they, will never recommend, but rather discredit the cause they have espoused.

10. Add to this, that they are not noble, not honourable men: if they were, you might bear with their folly. They are men of no interest, no authority, of no account in the world. They are mean and base, low in life: and such as have no power, if they had the will, to hurt you. Therefore, there is nothing at all to be feared from them: and there is nothing at all to hope. For the greater part of them may say, "Silver and gold have I none:" at least a very moderate share. Nay, some of them have scarcely food to eat, or raiment to put on. For this reason, as well as because their ways are not like those of other men, they are every where spoken against, are despised, have their names cast out as evil, are variously persecuted, and treated as the filth and offscouring of the world. So that both your fears, your hopes, and all your desires, (except those which you have immediately from God) yea, all your natural passions, continually incline you to return into the broad way.

III. 1. Therefore it is, that our Lord so earnestly exhorts, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Or (as the same exhortation is elsewhere expressed) *Strive to enter in:* Αγωνιζεσθε εισελθειν· *Strive as in an agony:* "For many," saith our Lord, "shall seek to enter in," indolently strive, "and shall not be able."

2. It is true, he intimates what may seem another reason for this, for their *not being able to enter in*, in the words which immediately follow these. For after he had said, "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," he subjoins, "When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand

without," αρξησθε εξω εσταναι. Rather, *Ye stand without;* for αρξησθε seems to be only an elegant expletive: "and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity," Luke xiii. 26, &c.

3. It may appear, upon a transient view of these words, that their delaying to seek at all, rather than their manner of seeking, was the reason why they were not able to enter in. But it comes, in effect, to the same thing. They were, therefore, commanded to depart, because they had been *workers of iniquity*, because they had walked in the broad road: in other words, because they had not agonized to "enter in at the strait gate." Probably they did *seek* before the door was shut: but that did not suffice. And they did *strive*, after the door was shut. But then it was too late.

4. Therefore, *strive* ye now, in this your day, *to enter in at the strait gate*. And in order thereto, settle it in your heart, and let it be ever uppermost in your thoughts, That if you are in a broad way, you are in the way that leadeth to destruction. If many go with you, as sure as God is true, both they and you are going to hell. If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomless pit. Are many wise, many rich, many mighty, or noble, travelling with you in the same way? By this token, without going any farther, you know it does not lead to life. Here is a short, a plain, and infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profession you are engaged, you must be singular, or be damned. The way to hell has nothing singular in it; but the way to heaven is singularity all over: if you move but one step towards God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. It is far better to stand alone, than to fall into the pit. Run, then, with patience the race which is set before thee, though thy companions therein are but few. They will not always be so. Yet a little while, and thou wilt "come to an innumerable company of angels, to the

general assembly and Church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

5. Now, then, "strive to enter in at the strait gate," being penetrated with the deepest sense of the inexpressible danger your souls are in, so long as you are in a broad way: so long as you are void of poverty of spirit, and all that inward Religion, which the many, the rich, the wise, account madness. "Strive to enter in," being pierced with sorrow and shame, for having so long run on with the unthinking crowd, utterly neglecting, if not despising, that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. Strive as in an agony of holy fear, lest "a promise being made you of entering into his rest," even that "rest which remaineth for the people of God," you should nevertheless "come short of it." Strive in all the fervour of desire, with "groanings that cannot be uttered." Strive by prayer without ceasing, at all times, in all places lifting up your heart to God, and giving him no rest, till you "awake up after his likeness" and are "satisfied with it."

6. To conclude. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," not only with this agony of soul, of conviction, of sorrow, of shame, of desire, of fear, of unceasing prayer, but likewise by *ordering* thy *conversation aright*, by walking with all thy strength, in all the ways of God, the way of innocence, of piety and mercy. Abstain from all appearance of evil: do all possible good to all men: deny thyself, thy own will, in all things, and take up thy cross daily. Be ready to cut off thy right hand, to pluck out thy right eye and cast it from thee: to suffer the loss of goods, friends, health, all things on earth, so thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XXXIV.

DISCOURSE XII.

ON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW vii. 15—20.

"*Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*
"*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*
"*Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*
"*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*
"*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*
"*Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.*"

1. IT is scarcely possible to express or conceive, what multitudes of souls run on to destruction, because they would not be persuaded to walk in a *narrow* way, even though it were the way to everlasting salvation. And the same thing we may still observe daily. Such is the folly and madness of mankind, that thousands of men still rush on in the way to hell, only because it is a *broad* way. They walk in it themselves, because others do: because so many

perish, they will add to the number. Such is the amazing influence of example, over the weak, miserable children of men! It continually peoples the regions of death, and drowns numberless souls in everlasting perdition.

2. To warn mankind of this, to guard as many as possible against this spreading contagion, God has commanded his watchmen to cry aloud, and shew the people the danger they are in. For this end he has sent his servants the Prophets, in their succeeding generations, to point out the narrow path, and exhort all men, not to be conformed to this world. But what if the watchmen themselves fall into the snare, against which they should warn others? What if "the Prophets prophesy deceits?" If they "caused the people to err from the way?" What shall be done, if they point out as the way to eternal life, what is in truth the way to eternal death? And exhort others to walk, as they do themselves, in the broad, not the narrow way?

3. Is this an unheard of, is it an uncommon thing? Nay, God knoweth it is not. The instances of it are almost innumerable. We may find them in every age and nation. But how terrible is this? When the Ambassadors of God, turn agents for the devil! When they, who are commissioned to teach men the way to heaven, do in fact teach them the way to hell! These are like the locusts of Egypt, "which eat up the residue that had escaped, that had remained after the hail." They devour even the residue of men that had escaped, that were not destroyed by ill example. It is not, therefore, without cause, that our wise and gracious Master, so solemnly cautions us against them: "Beware," saith he, "of false Prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

4. A caution this of the utmost importance.—That it may the more effectually sink into our hearts, let us enquire, first, Who these false prophets are: Secondly, What Appearance they put on: and, Thirdly, How we may know what they really are, notwithstanding their fair Appearance.

I. 1. We are, first, to enquire, Who these false Pro-

phets are. And this is needful to do the more diligently, because these very men have so laboured to *wrest this scripture to their own* (though not only their own) *destruction.* In order, therefore, to cut off all dispute, I shall raise no dust, (as the manner of some is,) neither use any loose, rhetorical exclamations, to deceive the hearts of the simple; but speak rough, plain truths, such as none can deny, who has either understanding or modesty left: and such truths, as have the closest connexion, with the whole tenour of the preceding Discourse. Whereas, too many have interpreted these words, without any regard to all that went before: as if they bore no manner of relation to the Sermon, in the close of which they stand.

2. By *Prophets* here (as in many other passages of Scripture, particularly in the New Testament,) are meant, not those who foretel things to come, but those who speak in the Name of God: those men who profess to be sent of God, to teach others the way to heaven.

Those are *false Prophets*, who teach a false way to heaven, a way which does not lead thither. Or (which comes, in the end, to the same point,) who do not teach the true way.

3. Every broad way is infallibly a false one. Therefore, this is one plain, sure rule, "They who teach men to walk in a broad way, a way that many walk in, are *false Prophets.*"

Again, the true way to heaven is a narrow way. Therefore, this is another plain, sure rule, "They who do not teach men to walk in a narrow way, to be singular, are *false Prophets.*"

4. To be more particular. The only true way to heaven, is that pointed out in the preceding Sermon. Therefore, they are *false Prophets* who do not teach men to walk in *this Way.*

Now, the way to heaven pointed out in the preceding Sermon, is the way of lowliness, mourning, meekness, and holy desire, love of God and of our neighbour, doing good, and suffering evil for Christ's sake. They are, there-

fore, *false Prophets*, who teach as the way to heaven, any other way than *this*.

5. It matters not, what they call that other way. They may call it *faith*, or *good works*: or *faith and works*: or *repentance*: or *repentance, faith, and new obedience*. All these are good words. But if under these, or any other terms whatever, they teach men any way distinct from *this*, they are properly *false Prophets*.

6. How much more do they fall under that condemnation, who speak evil of this good way! But above all, they who teach the directly opposite way! The way of pride, of levity, of passion, of worldly desires, of loving pleasure more than God, of unkindness to our neighbour, of unconcern for good works, and suffering no evil, no persecution for righteousness' sake!

7. If it be asked, Why, who ever did teach this? Or who does teach it, as the way to heaven? I answer: Ten thousand wise and honourable men: even all those, of whatever denomination, who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, the easy, careless, harmless, useless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness' sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are *false Prophets* in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the first-born of Satan: the eldest sons of Apollyon, the destroyer. These are far above the rank of ordinary cut-throats; for they murder the souls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night: and whenever they follow the poor souls, whom they have destroyed, "Hell shall be moved from beneath, to meet them at their coming."

II. 1. But do they come now, in their own shape? By no means. If it were so, they could not destroy. You would take the alarm, and flee for your life. Therefore, they put on a quite contrary appearance: (which was the second thing to be considered.) "They come to you in sheep's clothing, although inwardly they are ravening wolves."

2. "They come to you in sheep's clothing;" that is, with an appearance of harmlessness. They come in the most mild, inoffensive manner, without any mark or token of enmity. Who can imagine, that these quiet creatures, would do any hurt to any one? Perhaps they may not be so zealous and active in doing good, as one would wish they were. However, you see no reason to suspect, that they have even the desire to do any harm. But this is not all.

3. They come, secondly, with an appearance of usefulness. Indeed to this, to do good, they are particularly called. They are set apart for this very thing. They are particularly commissioned, to watch over your soul, and to train you up to eternal life. It is their whole business, to "go about doing good, and healing those that are oppressed of the devil." And you have been always accustomed to look upon them in this light, as messengers of God, sent to bring you a blessing.

4. They come, thirdly, with an appearance of Religion. All they do, is for conscience' sake! They can assure you, it is out of mere zeal for God, that they are making God a liar. It is out of pure concern for Religion, that they would destroy it, root and branch. All they speak, is only from a love of truth, and a fear lest it should suffer. And, it may be, from a regard for the Church, and a desire to defend her from all her enemies.

5. Above all, they come with an appearance of love. They take all these pains, only for *your* good. They should not trouble themselves about you, but that they have a kindness for you. They will make large professions of their good-will, of their concern for the danger you are in, and of their earnest desire, to preserve you from error, from being entangled in new and mischievous doctrines. They should be very sorry to see one who *means* so well, hurried into any extreme, perplexed with strange and unintelligible notions, or deluded into enthusiasm. Therefore, it is, that they advise you, to keep still, in the plain middle way: and to beware of *being righteous over-much*, lest you should *destroy yourself*.

III. 1. But how may we know, what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance? This was the third thing into which it is was proposed to enquire. Our blessed Lord saw how needful it was for all men to know *false Prophets*, however disguised. He saw, likewise, how unable most men were, to deduce a truth through a long train of consequences. He, therefore, gives us a short and plain rule, easy to be understood by men of the meanest capacities, and easy to be applied upon all occasions, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

2. Upon all occasions you may easily apply this rule. In order to know whether any, who speak in the name of God, are false or true Prophets, it is easy to observe, first, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to themselves? What effect has it had upon their lives? Are they holy and unblamable in all things? What effect has it had upon their hearts? Does it appear by the general tenor of their conversation, that their tempers are holy, heavenly, divine? That the mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus? That they are meek, lowly, patient, lovers of God and man, and zealous of good works?

3. You may easily observe, secondly, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to those that hear them. In many, at least, though not in all: For the Apostles themselves did not convert all that heard them. Have these the mind that was in Christ? And do they walk as he also walked? And was it by hearing these men, that they began so to do? Were they inwardly and outwardly wicked, till they heard them? If so, it is a manifest proof, that those are true Prophets, Teachers sent of God. But if it is not so, if they do not effectually teach either themselves or others to love and serve God; it is a manifest proof, that they are false Prophets; that God hath not sent them.

4. A hard saying this! How few can bear it! This our Lord was sensible of, and therefore condescends to prove it at large, by several clear and convincing arguments. "Do men," says he, "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of

thistles?" Do you expect that these evil men should bring forth good fruit? As well might you expect that thorns should bring forth grapes, or that figs should grow upon thistles! "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," ver. 17. Every true Prophet, every Teacher whom I have sent, bringeth forth the good fruit of holiness. But a false Prophet, a Teacher whom I have not sent, brings forth only sin and wickedness. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." A true Prophet, a Teacher sent from God, does not bring forth good fruit, sometimes only, but always; not accidentally, but by a kind of necessity. In like manner, a false Prophet, one whom God hath not sent, does not bring forth evil fruit accidentally, or sometimes only, but always, of necessity. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire," ver. 19. Such infallibly will be the lot of those Prophets, who bring not forth good fruit, who do not save souls from sin, who do not bring sinners to repentance. "Wherefore," let this stand as an eternal rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them," ver. 20. They who, in fact, bring the proud, passionate, unmerciful, lovers of the world, to be lowly, gentle, lovers of God and man: they are true Prophets, they are sent from God, who therefore confirms their word. On the other hand, they whose hearers, if unrighteous before, remain unrighteous still, or at least, void of any righteousness which "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees:" they are false Prophets; they are not sent of God; therefore, their words fall to the ground. And, without a miracle of grace, they, and their hearers together, will fall into the bottomless pit.

5. O "beware of these false Prophets!" For though they "come in sheep's clothing, yet inwardly they are ravening wolves." They only destroy and devour the flock: they tear them in pieces, if there be none to help them. They will not, cannot lead you in the way to heaven. How should they? When they know it not themselves. O be-

ware they do not turn you out of the way, and cause you to *lose what you have wrought!*

6. But, perhaps, you will ask, If there is such danger in hearing them, ought I to hear them at all? It is a weighty question, such as deserves the deepest consideration, and ought not to be answered, but upon the calmest thought, the most deliberate reflection. For many years, I have been almost afraid to speak at all concerning it: being unable to determine one way or another, or to give any judgment upon it. Many reasons there are which readily occur, and incline me to say, "Hear them not." And yet what our Lord speaks concerning the false Prophets of his own times, seems to imply the contrary. "Then spake Jesus unto the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat," are the ordinary, stated Teachers in your Church: "All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do. But do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." Now, that these were false Prophets in the highest sense, our Lord has shewn during the whole course of his ministry: as indeed he does in those very words, "They say and do not." Therefore, by their fruits his disciples could not but know them, seeing they were open to the view of all men. Accordingly, he warns them again and again, to *beware of* these *false Prophets.* And yet he does not forbid them to hear even these. Nay, in effect, commands them so to do, in those words, "All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." For unless they heard them, they could not know, much less *observe whatsoever they bade them do.* Here then our Lord himself gives a plain direction, both to his Apostles and the whole multitude, in some circumstances, to hear even false Prophets, known and acknowledged so to be.

7. But, perhaps, it will be said, he only directed to hear them, when they read the Scripture to the congregation. I answer, at the same time that they thus read the Scripture, they generally expounded it too. And here is no kind of intimation, that they were to hear the one, and not the other

also. Nay, the very terms, "All things whatsoever they bid you observe," exclude any such limitation.

8. Again, unto them, unto false Prophets, undeniably such, is frequently committed (O grief to speak! For surely these things ought not so to be) the administration of the sacraments also. To direct men, therefore, not to hear them, would be, in effect, to cut them off from the ordinances of God. But this we dare not do, considering the validity of the ordinance doth not depend on the goodness of him that administers, but on the faithfulness of him that ordained it, who will and doth meet us in his appointed ways. Therefore, on this account, likewise, I scruple to say, hear not even the false Prophets. Even by those who are under a curse themselves, God can, and doth give us his blessing. For the bread which they break, we have experimentally known to be "the communion of the body of Christ." And the cup which God blessed, even by their unhallowed lips, was to us the communion of the blood of Christ.

9. All, therefore, which I can say, is this: In any particular case, wait upon God by humble and earnest prayer, and then act according to the best light you have. Act according to what you are persuaded, upon the whole, will be most for your spiritual advantage. Take great care that you do not judge rashly; that you do not lightly think any to be false Prophets. And when you have full proof, see that no anger or contempt has any place in your heart. After this, in the presence, and in the fear of God, determine for yourself. I can only say, if by experience you find, that the hearing them hurts your soul, then hear them not: then quietly refrain, and hear those that profit you. If, on the other hand, you find, it does not hurt your soul, you then may hear them still. Only, *take heed how you hear: beware* of them and of their doctrine. Hear with fear and trembling, lest *you* should be deceived, and given up, like them, to a strong delusion. As they continually mingle truth and lies, how easily may you take in both together? Hear with a fervent and continual prayer, to him

who alone teacheth man wisdom. And see that you bring whatever you hear, *to the Law, and to the Testimony*. Receive nothing untried, nothing till it is weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary: Believe nothing they say, unless it is clearly confirmed by plain passages of Holy Writ. Wholly reject whatsoever differs therefrom, whatsoever is not confirmed thereby. And particularly, reject, with the utmost abhorrence, whatsoever is described as the way of salvation, that is either different from, or short of, the way our Lord has marked out in the foregoing Discourse.

10. I cannot conclude, without addressing a few plain words, to those of whom we have now been speaking. O ye false Prophets! O ye dry bones! hear ye, for once, the Word of the Lord. How long will ye lie in the name of God, saying, "God hath spoken:" and God hath not spoken by you? How long will ye pervert the right ways of the Lord, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness? How long will ye teach the way of death, and call it the way of life? How long will ye deliver to Satan the souls, whom ye profess to bring unto God?

11. "Woe unto you, ye blind leaders of the blind! For ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Them that would strive to enter in at the strait gate, ye call back into the broad way. Them that have scarcely gone one step in the ways of God, you devilishly caution against *going too far*. Them that just begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness, you warn not to be *righteous overmuch*. Thus you cause them to stumble at the very threshold; yea, to fall and rise no more. O wherefore do ye this? What profit is there in their blood, when they go down to the pit? Miserable profit to you! "They shall perish in their iniquity: but their blood will God require at your hands!"

12. Where are your eyes? Where is your understanding? Have ye deceived others, till you have deceived yourselves also? Who hath required this at your hands, to *teach* a way which ye never *knew*? Are you *given up*

so *strong a delusion*, that ye not only teach, but *believe* a *lie?* And can you possibly believe, that God hath sent you? That ye are *his* messengers? Nay; if the Lord had sent you, the *work of the Lord* would *prosper in your hand.* As the Lord liveth, if ye were messengers of God, he would *confirm the word of his messengers.* But the work of the Lord doth not prosper in your hand: you bring no sinners to repentance. The Lord doth not confirm your word: for you save no souls from death.

13. How can you possibly evade the force of our Lord's words? So full, so strong, so express! How can ye evade *knowing* yourselves *by your fruits?* Evil fruits of evil trees? And how should it be otherwise? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Take this to yourselves, ye to whom it belongs. O ye barren trees, why cumber ye the ground? "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." See ye not, that here is no exception? Take knowledge then, ye are not good trees: for ye do not bring forth good fruit. "But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." And so have ye done from the beginning. Your speaking as from God, has only confirmed them that heard you, in the tempers, if not works of the devil. O take warning of him in whose name ye speak, before the sentence he hath pronounced take place. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."

14. My dear Brethren, harden not your hearts. You have too long shut your eyes against the light. Open them now before it is too late; before you are cast into outer darkness. Let not any temporal consideration weigh with you: for eternity is at stake. Ye have run before ye were sent. O go no farther. Do not persist to damn yourselves and them that hear you! You have no fruit of your labours. And why is this? Even because the Lord is not with you. But can you go this warfare at your own cost? It cannot be. Then humble yourselves before him. Cry unto him out of the dust, that he may first quicken *thy* soul: give *thee* the faith that worketh by love: that is lowly and meek,

pure and merciful, zealous of good works; rejoicing in tribulation, in reproach, in distress, in persecution for righteousness' sake. So shall "the Spirit of glory and of Christ rest upon thee," and it shall appear that God hath sent thee. So shall thou indeed "do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of thy ministry. So shall the word of God in thy mouth be "a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces." It shall then be known by thy fruits, that thou art a Prophet of the Lord, even by the children whom God hath given thee. And having "turned many to righteousness, thou shalt shine as the stars for ever and ever!"

SERMON XXXV.

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW vii. 21—27.

"*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

"*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works?*

"*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

"*Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

"*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

"*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

"*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*"

1. OUR divine Teacher having declared the whole counsel of God, with regard to the way of salvation, and observed the chief hindrances of those who desire to walk therein, now closes the whole with these weighty words; thereby as it were setting his Seal to his Prophecy, and impressing his whole authority on what he had delivered, that it might stand firm to all generations.

2. For thus saith the Lord, that none may ever conceive, there is any other way than this, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. Therefore, every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

3. I design, in the following discourse, First, to consider the case of him, who thus builds his house upon the sand: Secondly, to shew the wisdom of him who builds upon a rock: And, Thirdly, To conclude with a practical Application.

I. 1. And, first, I am to consider the case of him who builds his house upon the sand. It is concerning him our Lord saith, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And this is a decree which cannot pass; which standeth fast for ever and ever. It therefore imports us, in the highest degree, thoroughly to understand the force of these words. Now what are we to understand by that expression, "That saith unto me, Lord, Lord?" It undoubtedly means, *that thinks of going to heaven by any other way than that which I have now described.* It therefore implies, (to begin at the lowest point) all good words, all verbal religion. It includes, whatever creeds we may rehearse, whatever pro-

fessions of faith we make: whatever number of prayers we may repeat, whatever thanksgivings we read or say to God. We may speak good of his name; and declare his loving-kindness to the children of men. We may be talking of all his mighty acts, and telling of his salvation from day to day. By comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we may shew the meaning of the Oracles of God. We may explain the mysteries of his kingdom, which have been hid from the beginning of the world. We may speak with the tongue of angels rather than men, concerning the deep things of God. We may proclaim to sinners, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Yea, we may do this with such a measure of the power of God, and such demonstration of his Spirit, as to save many souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins. And yet it is very possible, all this may be no more than saying, *Lord, Lord.* After I have thus successfully preached to others, still I myself may be a cast-away. I may, in the hand of God, snatch many souls from hell, and yet drop into it when I have done. I may bring many others to the kingdom of heaven, and yet myself never enter there. Reader, if God hath ever blessed my word to *thy* soul, pray that he may be merciful to *me* a sinner!

2. The saying, *Lord, Lord!* may, secondly, imply, The doing no harm. We may abstain from every presumptuous sin, from every kind of outward wickedness. We may refrain from all those ways of acting or speaking, which are forbidden in holy Writ. We may be able to say to all those among whom we live, Which of you convinceth me of sin? We may have a conscience void of any external offence, towards God and towards man. We may be clear of all uncleanness, ungodliness, and unrighteousness, as to the outward act: or, (as the Apostle testifies concerning himself) *touching the righteousness of the law*, i. e. outward righteousness, *blameless*. But yet we are not hereby justified. Still this is no more than saying, *Lord, Lord!* And if we go no farther than this, we shall never "enter into the kingdom of heaven."

3. The saying, *Lord, Lord!* may imply, thirdly, Many of what are usually stiled, Good Works. A man may attend the supper of the Lord, may hear abundance of excellent sermons, and omit no opportunity of partaking all the ordinances of God. I may do good to my neighbour, deal my bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment. I may be so zealous of good works, as even to "give all my goods to feed the poor." Yea, and I may do all this, with a desire to please God, and a real belief that I do please him thereby: (which is undeniably the case of those our Lord introduces, *saying unto him, Lord, Lord!*) and still I may have no part in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. If any man marvel at this, let him acknowledge he is a stranger to the whole Religion of Jesus Christ: and in particular, to that perfect portraiture thereof, which he has set before us in this Discourse. For how far short is all this, of that righteousness and true holiness, which he has described therein! How widely distant from that inward kingdom of heaven, which is now opened in the believing soul! Which is first sown in the heart as a grain of mustard-seed, but afterwards putteth forth great branches, on which grow all the fruits of righteousness, every good temper, and word, and work.

5. Yet as clearly as he had declared this, as frequently as he had repeated, That none who have not this kingdom of God within them, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; our Lord well knew, that many would not receive this saying, and therefore confirms it yet again: "Many" (saith he; not one; not a few only: it is not a rare or an uncommon case) "shall say unto me in that day:" not only, We have said many prayers; we have spoken thy praise; we have refrained from evil; we have exercised ourselves in doing good: but what is abundantly more than this, "We have prophesied in thy name. In thy name have we cast out devils; in thy name done many wonderful works." *We have prophesied:* we have declared thy will to mankind; we have shewed sinners the way to peace and glory.

And we have done this, *in thy name*, according to the truth of thy Gospel. Yea, and by thy authority, who didst confirm the word, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. For *in* or *by thy name*, by the power of thy Word and of thy Spirit, *have we cast out devils;* out of the souls which they had long claimed as their own, and whereof they had full and quiet possession. *And in thy name*, by thy power, not our own, *have we done many wonderful works:* insomuch that even *the dead heard the voice of the Son of God* speaking by us, and lived. *And then will I profess* even *unto them, I never knew you:* no, not then, when you were *casting out devils in my name.* Even then I did not know you as my own: for your heart was not right toward God. Ye were not yourselves meek and lowly, ye were not lovers of God and of all mankind: ye were not renewed in the image of God. Ye were not holy, as I am holy. *Depart from me* (who notwithstanding all this, are) *workers of iniquity;* ανομια. Ye are transgressors of my law, my Law of holy and perfect Love.

6. It is, to put this beyond all possibility of contradiction, that our Lord confirms it by that apposite comparison: "Every one," saith he, "who heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house:" as they will surely do, sooner or later, upon every soul of man: even the floods of outward affliction, or inward temptation; the storms of pride, anger, fear, or desire:—"And it fell, and great was the fall of it:" so that it perished for ever and ever. Such must be the portion of all who rest in any thing short of that Religion, which is above described. And the *greater* will their *fall* be, because they *heard those sayings, and* yet *did them not.*

II. 1. I am, secondly, To shew the wisdom of him that doeth them, that, "buildeth his house upon a rock." He indeed is wise, "who doeth the Will of my Father which is in heaven." He is truly wise, whose "righteousness

exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees." He is poor in spirit; knowing himself even as also he is known. He sees and feels all his sin, and all his guilt, till it is washed away by the atoning blood. He is conscious of his lost estate, of the wrath of God abiding on him, and of his utter inability to help himself, till he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. He is meek and gentle, patient toward all men, never "returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing," till he overcomes evil with good. His soul is athirst for nothing on earth, but only for God, the living God. He has bowels of love for all mankind, and is ready to lay down his life for his enemies. He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength. He alone shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who, in this spirit, doth good unto all men; and who, being for this cause despised and rejected of men, being hated, reproached, and persecuted, *rejoices, and is exceeding glad*, knowing in whom he hath believed; and being assured, these light, momentary afflictions, will "work out for him an eternal weight of glory."

2. How truly wise is that man! He knows himself; an everlasting spirit, which came forth from God, and was sent down into an house of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He knows the world; the place in which he is to pass a few days or years, not as an inhabitant, but as a stranger and sojourner, in his way to the everlasting habitations: and accordingly he uses the world, as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away. He knows God, his Father and his Friend, the Parent of all good, the Centre of the spirits of all flesh, the sole happiness of all intelligent beings. He sees, clearer than the light of the noon-day sun, that this is the end of man, To glorify Him who made him for himself, and to love and enjoy him for ever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end, to the enjoyment of God in glory; even now to know, to love, to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

3. He is a wise man, even in God's account; for "he buildeth his house upon a rock:" upon the Rock of Ages, the everlasting Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fitly is he so called; for he changeth not. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." To him, both the man of God of old, and the Apostle citing his words, bear witness; "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Heb. i. 10, 12. Wise, therefore, is the man who buildeth on him; who layeth him for his only foundation; who builds only upon his blood and righteousness, upon what he hath done and suffered for us. On this Corner-stone he fixes his faith, and rests the whole weight of his soul upon it. He is taught of God to say, Lord, I have sinned: I deserve the nethermost hell. But I am "justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And the life I now live, I live by faith in him, who loved me and gave himself for me." *The life I now live:* namely, a divine, heavenly life; a life, which is "hid with Christ in God." I now live even in the flesh, a life of love, of pure love both to God and man: a life of holiness and happiness, praising God and doing all things to his glory.

4. Yet, let not such a one think, That he shall not see war any more, that he is now out of the reach of temptation. It still remains for God to prove the grace he hath given: he shall be tried as gold in the fire. He shall be tempted not less than they who know not God: perhaps abundantly more. For Satan will not fail to try to the uttermost those whom he is not able to destroy: accordingly, *the rain* will impetuously *descend:* only at such times and in such a manner, as seems good, not to the prince of the power of the air, but to Him "whose kingdom ruleth over all." *The floods*, or torrents, *will come;* they will lift up their waves and rage horribly. But to them also, the Lord

that sitteth above the water floods, that remaineth a King for ever, will say, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther: here shall your proud waves be stayed." "The winds will blow and beat upon that house," as though they would tear it up from the foundation. But they cannot prevail: it falleth not; for it is founded upon a Rock. He buildeth on Christ by faith and love; therefore, he shall not be cast down. He "shall not fear though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea." "Though the waters thereof rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same: still he "dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, and is safe under the shadow of the Almighty."

III. 1. How nearly then does it concern every child of man, practically to apply these things to himself? Diligently to examine, on what foundation he builds, whether on a rock or on the sand? How deeply are *you* concerned to enquire, What is the foundation of *my* hope? Whereon do I build my expectation of entering into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not built on the sand? Upon my *orthodoxy* or right opinions, (which by a gross abuse of words I have called *faith?*) Upon my having a set of notions, (suppose more rational or scriptural than many others have?) Alas! what madness is this! Surely this is building on the sand, or rather on the froth of the sea! Say, I am convinced of this. Am I not again building my hope on what is equally unable to support it? Perhaps on my belonging to "so excellent a Church: reformed after the true Scripture model: blest with the purest doctrine, the most primitive liturgy, the most apostolical form of government!" These are, doubtless, so many reasons for praising God, as they may be so many helps to holiness. But they are not holiness itself. And if they are separated from it, they will profit me nothing. Nay, they will leave me the more without excuse, and exposed to the greater damnation. Therefore, if I build my hope upon this foundation, I am still building upon the sand.

2. You cannot, you dare not rest here. Upon what next

will you build your hope of salvation? Upon your innocence? Upon your doing no harm? Your not wronging or hurting any one? Well; allow this plea to be true. You are just in all your dealings: you are a downright honest man: You pay every man his own: you neither cheat nor extort: you act fairly with all mankind. And you have a conscience towards God: you do not live in any known sin. Thus far is well. But still it is not the thing. You may go thus far, and yet never come to heaven. When all this harmlessness flows from a right principle, it is the *least part* of the Religion of Christ. But in you it does not flow from a right principle, and, therefore, is no part at all of Religion. So that in grounding your hope of salvation on this, you are still building upon the sand.

3. Do you go farther yet? Do you add to the doing no harm, the attending all the ordinances of God? Do you, at all opportunities, partake of the Lord's-supper? Use public and private prayer? Fast often? Hear and search the Scriptures, and meditate thereon? These things, likewise, ought you to have done, from the time you first set your face towards heaven. Yet these things also are nothing, being alone. They are nothing without the weightier matters of the Law. And those you have forgotten. At least, you experience them not; faith, mercy, and the love of God: holiness of heart: heaven opened in the soul. Still, therefore, you build upon the sand.

4. Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction? Do you visit those that are sick? Relieve them that are in prison? Is any a stranger, and do you take him in? Friend, come up higher. Do you *prophesy in the name of Christ?* Do you preach the truth as it is in Jesus? And does the influence of his Spirit attend your word, and make it the power of God unto salvation? Does he enable you to bring sinners from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God? Then go and learn what thou hast so often taught,

"By grace ye are saved through faith. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saveth us." Learn to hang naked upon the cross of Christ, counting all thou hast done but dung and dross. Apply to him just in the spirit of the dying thief, of the harlot with her seven devils. Else thou art still on the sand, and after saving others, thou wilt lose thy own soul.

5. Lord, increase my faith, if I now believe! Else, give me faith, though but as a grain of mustard-seed!—But "what doth it profit, if a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can that faith save him?" O no! That faith which hath not works, which doth not produce both inward and outward holiness, which does not stamp the whole image of God on the heart, and purify us as he is pure: that faith which does not produce the whole of the Religion described in the foregoing chapters, is not the faith of the gospel, not the Christian faith, not the faith which leads to glory. O beware of this above all other snares of the devil, of resting on unholy, unsaving faith! If thou layest stress on this, thou art lost for ever: thou still buildest thy house upon the sand. When "the rain descends and the floods come, it will surely fall, and great will be the fall of it."

6. Now, therefore, build thou upon a rock. By the grace of God, know thyself. Know and feel, that thou wast shapen in wickedness, and in sin did thy mother conceive thee: and yet thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Own thyself guilty of eternal death: and renounce all hope of ever being able to save thyself. Be it all thy hope, to be washed in his blood, and purified by his Spirit, "who himself bore all thy sins, in his own Body upon the tree." And if thou knowest he hath taken away thy sins, so much the more abase thyself before him, in a continual sense of thy total dependance on him for every good thought, and work, and word, and of thy utter inability to all good, unless he *water thee every moment.*

7. Now weep for your sins, and mourn after God, till he turn your heaviness into joy. And even then weep with

them that weep: and for them that weep not for themselves. Mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: and see, but just before your eyes, the immense ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore: which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. See here, the house of God eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering. And hence learn the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever!

8. Now add to your seriousness, meekness of wisdom. Hold an even scale as to all your passions, but in particular, as to anger, sorrow, and fear. Calmly acquiesce in whatsoever is the Will of God. Learn in every state wherein you are, therewith to be content. Be mild to the good: be gentle toward all men; but especially toward the evil and the unthankful. Beware, not only of outward expressions of anger, such as calling thy brother, *Raca*, or thou fool! but of every inward emotion contrary to love, though it go no farther than the heart. Be angry at sin, at an affront offered to the Majesty of heaven; but love the sinner still: like our Lord, who "looked round about upon the Pharisees with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was grieved at the sinners, angry at the sin. Thus *be* thou *angry and sin not.*

9. Now do thou hunger and thirst, not for "the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." Trample under foot the world, and the things of the world: all these riches, honours, pleasures. What is the world to thee? Let the dead bury their dead: but follow thou after the image of God. And beware of quenching that blessed thirst, if it is already excited in thy soul, by what is vulgarly called Religion, a poor, dull farce, a Religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart still cleaving to the dust, as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a Religion that is spirit and life; the dwelling in God and God in thee; the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering

in by the Blood of Sprinkling: "within the veil," and "sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

10. Now seeing thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, be merciful as thy Father in heaven is merciful. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Love friends and enemies as thy own soul. And let thy love be *long suffering* and patient to all men. Let it be *kind*, soft, benign: inspiring thee with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection. Let it *rejoice in the truth*, wheresoever it is found, the truth that is after godliness. Enjoy whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men. In love, *cover all things*, of the dead and the absent speaking nothing but good: *believe all things*, which may any way tend to clear your neighbour's character; *hope all things*, in his favour, and *endure all* things, triumphing over all opposition. For, *love never faileth*, in time or eternity.

11. Now be thou *pure in heart;* purified through faith from every unholy affection, "cleansing thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Being, through the power of his grace, purified from pride by deep poverty of spirit; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and mercifulness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God, by hunger and thirst after righteousness; now love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy strength.

12. In a word: Let thy Religion be the Religion of thy heart. Let it lie deep in thy inmost soul. Be thou little, and base, and mean, and vile, (beyond what words can express) in thy own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust, by the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Be serious. Let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and actions, flow from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulf, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either to everlasting glory or everlasting burnings. Let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering towards all men: at the same

time that all which is in thee, is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit, do and suffer all things. Thus shew thy faith by thy works: thus "do the will of thy Father which is in heaven." And as sure as thou now walkest with God on earth, thou shalt also reign with him in glory.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, PROPERTIES, AND USE OF THE LAW.

ROMANS VII. 12.

"*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*"

1. PERHAPS there are few subjects within the whole compass of Religion, so little understood as this. The reader of this epistle is usually told, by *the Law* St. Paul means the *Jewish Law:* and so apprehending himself to have no concern therewith, passes on without farther thought about it. Indeed some are not satisfied with this account: but observing the epistle is directed to the Romans, thence infer, that the Apostle in the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the old *Roman Law*. But as they have no more concern with this, than with the *ceremonial Law* of *Moses*, so they spend not much thought, on what they suppose is occasionally mentioned, barely to illustrate another thing.

2. But a careful observer of the Apostle's discourse, will not be content with these slight explications of it. And the more he weighs the words, the more convinced he will be, that St. Paul by *the Law* mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of Rome, or the ceremonial law of Moses. This will clearly appear to all who attentively consider the tenour of his discourse. He begins the chapter, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that

know the law," to them who have been instructed therein from their youth) "that the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth?" ver. 1. (What the law of *Rome* only, or the *ceremonial* law? No surely; but the Moral Law:) "for," to give a plain instance, "the woman that hath an husband, is bound by the (moral) law to her husband so long as he liveth. But if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband, ver. 2. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adultress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adultress, though she be married to another man," ver. 3. From this particular instance the Apostle proceeds to draw that general conclusion: "Wherefore, my brethren," by a plain parity of reason, "ye also are become dead to the law," the whole Mosaic Institution, "by the body of Christ," offered for you, and bringing you under a new dispensation: "that ye should" [without any blame] "be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead," and hath thereby given proof of his authority to make the change, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God," ver. 4. And this we can do now, whereas before we could not: "for when we were in the flesh," under the power of the flesh, that is, of corrupt nature, [which was necessarily the case till we knew the power of Christ's resurrection] "the motions of sin, which were by the law," which were shewn and inflamed by the Mosaic law, not conquered, "did work in our members," broke out various ways, "to bring forth fruit unto death," ver. 5. "But now we are delivered from the law," from that whole moral, as well as ceremonial economy: "that being dead wherein we are held:" that entire institution being now, as it were, dead, and having no more authority over us, than the husband when dead hath over his wife: "that we should serve him," who died for us and rose again, "in newness of spirit," in a new spiritual dispensation, "and not in the oldness of the letter," ver. 6; with a bare outward service, according to the letter of the Mosaic institution.

3. The Apostle having gone thus far, in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation, and that the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet it stood on a different foundation from what it had done before, now stops to propose and answer an objection, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" So some might infer from a misapprehension of those words, "the motions of sin which were by the law." "God forbid!" saith the Apostle, that we should say so. Nay, the law is an irreconcileable enemy to sin; searching it out wherever it is. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust," evil desire to be sin, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," ver. 7. After opening this farther, in the four following verses, he subjoins this general conclusion, with regard more especially to the moral law, from which the preceding instance was taken: "Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

4. In order to explain and enforce these deep words, so little regarded, because so little understood, I shall endeavour to shew, First, The Original of this Law: Secondly, The Nature thereof: Thirdly, the Properties, that it is *holy*, and *just*, and *good*: and, Fourthly, The Uses of it.

I. 1. I shall first, endeavour to shew the Original of the Moral Law, often called *the Law*, by way of eminence. Now this is not, as some may have possibly imagined, of so late an institution as the time of Moses. Noah declared it to men long before that time, and Enoch before him. But we may trace its original higher still, even beyond the foundation of the world, to that period, unknown indeed to men, but, doubtless, enrolled in the annals of eternity, when *the morning stars* first *sang together*, being newly called into existence. It pleased the great Creator, to make these his first-born sons, intelligent beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end he endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil: and as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of choosing the one and refusing the other. By this they were, likewise, enabled to offer him a free and willing

service: a service rewardable in itself, as well as most acceptable to their gracious Master.

2. To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a complete model of all truth, so far as was intelligible to a finite being, and of all good, so far as angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein, to make way for a continual increase of their happiness: seeing every instance of obedience to that law, would both add to the perfection of their nature, and entitle them to a higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season.

3. In like manner, when God, in his appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent beings, when he had raised man from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life, and caused him to become a living soul, endued with power to choose good or evil: he gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children: not wrote indeed upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmost spirit both of men and angels: to the intent it might never be afar off, never hard to be understood; but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the sun in the midst of heaven.

4. Such was the original of the law of God. With regard to man it was coeval with his nature. But with regard to the elder sons of God, it shone in its full splendour, "or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made." But it was not long before man rebelled against God, and by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; *the eyes of his understanding* being *darkened*, in the same measure as his soul was "alienated from the life of God." And yet God did not despise the work of his own hands: but being reconciled to man through the Son of his love, he, in some measure, reinscribed his law on the heart of his dark sinful creature. "He" again "shewed thee, O man, what is good," (al-

though not as in the beginning) "even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

5. And this he shewed, not only to our first parents, but likewise to all their posterity, by "that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world." But, notwithstanding this light, all flesh had, in process of time, "corrupted their way before him:" till he chose out of mankind a peculiar people, to whom he gave a more perfect knowledge of his law. And the heads of this, because they were slow of understanding, he wrote on two tables of stone; which he commanded the fathers to teach their children, through all succeeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our instruction. But this does not suffice. They cannot, by this mean, comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by his Spirit. And so he does to all that truly believe, in consequence of that gracious promise, made to all the Israel of God: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. And this shall be the covenant that I will make, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 31, &c.

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in paradise, and which God has so mercifully promised to write afresh, in the hearts of all true believers, was the second thing I proposed to shew. In order to which I would first observe, That although *the law* and *the commandment* are sometimes differently taken, (the commandment meaning but a part of the law) yet, in the text, they are used as equivalent terms, implying one and the same thing. But we cannot understand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial law. It is not the ceremonial law, whereof the Apostle says, in the words above recited, "I had not known sin but by the law:" this is too

plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial law which saith, in the words immediately subjoined, "Thou shalt not covet." Therefore, the ceremonial law has no place in the present question.

2. Neither can we understand by the law mentioned in the text, the Mosaic dispensation. It is true, the word is sometimes so understood: as when the Apostle says, speaking to the Galatians, (chap. iii. 17,) "The covenant which was confirmed before," (namely, with Abraham the father of the faithful,) "the law," i. e. the Mosaic dispensation, "which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But it cannot be so understood in the text; for the Apostle never bestows so high commendations as these upon that imperfect and shadowy dispensation. He no where affirms, the Mosaic to be a spiritual law: or, that it is *holy*, and *just*, and *good*. Neither is it true, that God will *write* that law *in the* hearts of them whose *iniquities he remembers no more*. It remains, that *the Law*, eminently so termed, is no other than the Moral Law.

3. Now this law is an incorruptible picture of the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity. It is he, whom in his essence no man hath seen or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled: God manifested to his creatures as they are able to bear it: manifested to give, and not to destroy life; that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense, we may apply to this law, what the Apostle says of his Son, it is απαυγασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου. "*The streaming forth*," or *out-beaming* "of his glory, the express image of his person."

4. "If virtue," said the ancient heathen, "could assume such a shape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us!" If virtue could do this! It is done already. The law of God is all virtues in one, in such a shape, as to be beheld with open face, by all those whose eyes God hath enlightened. What is the law but divine virtue and wisdom, assuming a visible form? What is it, but the original ideas of truth and good,

which were lodged in the uncreated Mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle, as to appear even to human understanding?

5. If we survey the law of God in another point of view, it is supreme, unchangeable reason: it is unalterable rectitude: it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created. I am sensible, what a shortness, and even impropriety there is, in these and all other human expressions, when we endeavour by these faint pictures, to shadow out the deep things of God. Nevertheless, we have no better, indeed no other way, during this our infant state of existence. *As we* now *know* but *in part*, so *we* are constrained to *prophesy*, i. e. speak of the things of God *in part* also. "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness," while we are in this house of clay. While I am *a child, I* must *speak as a child.* But I shall soon *put away childish things.* "For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

6. But to return. The law of God, (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal Mind, a transcript of the Divine Nature: yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High. It is the delight and wonder of Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the company of heaven, and the glory and joy of every wise believer, every well instructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the Nature of the ever-blessed law of God. I am, in the third place, to shew the properties of it: not all; for that would exceed the wisdom of an angel. But those only which are mentioned in the text. These are three: *It is holy, just,* and *good.* And first, *The law is holy.*

2. In this expression the Apostle does not appear to speak of its effects, but rather of its nature: as St. James, speaking of the same thing under another name, says, "The Wisdom from above," (which is no other than this law, written in our heart,) "is first pure," chap. iii. 17, αγνη, *chaste, spotless,* eternally and essentially *holy.* And con-

sequently when it is transcribed into the life, as well as the soul, it is, (as the same Apostle terms it, chap. i. 27,) θρησκεια καθαρα και αμιαντος· *pure Religion and undefiled;* or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worship of God.

3. It is, indeed, in the highest degree, pure, chaste, clean, holy. Otherwise, it could not be the immediate offspring, and much less the express resemblance, of God, who is essential holiness. It is pure from all sin, clean and unspotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaste virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowship with sin of any kind. For "what communion hath light with darkness?" As sin is, in its very nature, enmity to God, so his law is enmity to sin.

4. Therefore it is, that the Apostle rejects with such abhorrence, that blasphemous supposition, that *the law* of God *is* either *sin* itself, or the cause of sin. God *forbid*, that we should suppose, it is the cause of sin, because it is the discoverer of it: because it detects the hidden things of darkness, and drags them out into open day. It is true, by this mean, (as the Apostle observes, ver. 13,) "Sin appears to be sin." All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. It is true likewise, that "sin, by the commandment, becomes exceeding sinful." Being now committed against light and knowledge, being stript even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse as well as disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that "sin worketh death by that which is good," which in itself is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: when it is restrained, it bursts out with greater violence. Thus the Apostle, (speaking in the person of one, who was convinced of sin, but not yet delivered from it) "sin taking occasion by the commandment," detecting and endeavouring to restrain it, disdained the restraint, and so much the more "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence," ver. 8: All manner of foolish and hurtful desires, which that commandment sought to restrain. Thus, "when the command-

ment came, sin revived," ver. 9. It fretted and raged the more. But this is no stain on the commandment. Though it is abused, it cannot be defiled. This only proves, that "the heart of man is desperately wicked." But *the law of* God is *holy* still.

5. And it is, secondly, *just*. It renders to all their due. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said, or thought, both with regard to the Author of our being, with regard to ourselves, and with regard to every creature which he has made. It is adapted, in all respects, to the nature of things, of the whole universe, and every individual. It is suited to all the circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitnesses of things, whether essential or accidental. It clashes with none of these in any degree; nor is ever unconnected with them. If the word be taken in that sense, there is nothing *arbitrary* in the law of God. Although still the whole and every part thereof, is totally dependent upon his Will: so that *thy Will be done*, is the supreme universal law both in earth and heaven.

6. "But is the Will of God the cause of his law? Is his Will the original of right and wrong? Is a thing, therefore, right, because God wills it? Or, does he will it, because it is right?"

I fear, this celebrated question is more curious than useful. And perhaps, in the manner it is usually treated of, it does not so well consist with the regard that is due from a creature, to the Creator and Governor of all things. It is hardly decent for man, to call the supreme God to give an account to him. Nevertheless, with awe and reverence we may speak a little. The Lord pardon us if we speak amiss.

7. It seems then, that the whole difficulty arises, from considering God's Will as distinct from God. Otherwise it vanishes away. For none can doubt, but God is the cause of the law of God. But the Will of God is God himself. It is God considered as willing thus or thus. Consequently,

to say, That the Will of God, or that God himself is the cause of the law, is one and the same thing.

8. Again; if the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends on the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations to each other: (I do not say, their eternal relations: because the eternal relations of things existing in time, is little less than a contradiction) if, I say, this depends on the nature and relations of things, then it must depend on God, or the will of God: because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the work of his hands. By his Will, *for his pleasure* alone, *they* all *are and were created.*

9. And yet it may be granted (which is probably all that a considerate person would contend for) that in every particular case, God wills this or this, (suppose that men should honour their parents,) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation wherein they stand.

10. The law then is right and just concerning all things. And it is *good* as well as *just*. This we may easily infer from the Fountain whence it flowed. For what was this, but the goodnes of God? What but goodness alone inclined him to impart that divine copy of himself to the holy angels? To what else can we impute his bestowing upon man the same transcript of his own nature? And what but tender love, constrained him afresh to manifest his will to fallen man? Either to Adam, or any of his seed, who like him were "come short of the glory of God?" Was it not mere love that moved him to publish his law, after the understandings of men were darkened? And to send his prophets to declare that law, to the blind, thoughtless children of men? Doubtless his goodness it was which raised up Enoch and Noah, to be preachers of righteousness; which caused Abraham, his friend, and Isaac and Jacob, to bear witness to his truth. It was his goodness alone, which when "darkness had covered the earth, and thick darkness the people," gave a written law to Moses, and through him to the nation whom he had chosen. It was his love which explained these living Oracles by David and all the Prophets that followed: until,

when the fulness of time was come, he sent his only-begotten Son, "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil," to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till having written it in the hearts of all his children, and put all his enemies under his feet, "he shall deliver up" his mediatorial "kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all."

11. And this law, which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved through all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it springs, full of goodness and benignity: it is mild and kind; it is, as the Psalmist expresses it, "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." It is winning and amiable. It includes "whatsoever things are lovely or of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise" before God and his holy angels, they are all comprised in this: wherein are hid all the treasures of the divine wisdom, and knowledge, and love.

12. And it is good in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, so are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart, are "righteousness, and peace, and assurance for ever." Or rather, the law itself is righteousness, filling the soul with a peace that passeth all understanding, and causing us to rejoice evermore, in the testimony of a good conscience toward God. It is not so properly a pledge, as "an earnest of our inheritance," being a part of the purchased possession. It is God made manifest in our flesh, and bringing with him, eternal life: assuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are "sealed unto the day of redemption:" and he will "spare us as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, in the day when he maketh up his jewels," and that there remaineth for us "a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

IV. 1. It remains only to shew, in the fourth and last place, The Uses of the Law. And the first use of it, without question, is to convince the world of sin. This is, indeed, the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost: who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaseth him, however insufficient in themselves, or even improper to produce such an effect. And accordingly some

there are, whose hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in sickness or in health, without any visible cause, or any outward mean whatever. And others (one in an age) have been awakened to a sense of the *wrath of God abiding on* them, by hearing, That "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God, to convict sinners by the law. It is this, which being set home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more especially this part of *the word of God*, which *is* ζων και ενεργης, *quick and powerful*, full of life and energy, *and sharper than any two-edged sword.* This, in the hand of God and of those whom he hath sent, pierces through all the folds of a deceitful heart, and "divides asunder even the soul and the spirit," yea, as it were, the very "joints and marrow." By this is the sinner discovered to himself. All his fig-leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." The law flashes conviction on every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His *mouth is stopped*, and he stands *guilty before God.*

2. To slay the sinner is, then, the first use of the law; to destroy the life and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, "dead in trespasses and sins." The second use of it, is to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live. It is true, in performing both these offices, it acts the part of a severe school-master. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the Spirit of Love, which, by this painful mean, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stripped of all, to cry out, in the bitterness of his soul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

> "I give up every plea beside,
> Lord, I am damn'd;—but thou hast died."

3. The third use of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand mean whereby the blessed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little understood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of these lay it down as an unquestionable truth, that when we come to Christ, we have done with the law; and that in this sense, "Christ is the end of the law, to every one that believeth." *The end of the law.* So he is, *for righteousness*, for justification, *to every one that believeth.* Herein the law is at an end. It justifies none; but only brings them to Christ. Who is also, in another respect, *the end*, or scope *of the law*, the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, To keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more,

"Closer and closer let us cleave
To his belov'd embrace,
Expect his fulness to receive,
And grace to answer grace."

4. Allowing then, that every believer has done with the law, as it means the Jewish ceremonial law, or the entire Mosaic dispensation (for these *Christ hath taken out of the way;*) yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a mean of procuring our justification, for we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus." Yet in another sense, we have not done with this law. For it is still of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ, that his blood may cleanse us every moment; secondly, in deriving strength from our Head into his living members, whereby he impowers them to do what his law commands; and, thirdly, in confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands and we have noy et

attained, of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of his promises.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer! while he cries out, "O what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my study in it;" he sees daily in that divine mirror, more and more of his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly, that he is still a sinner in all things; that neither his heart nor his ways are right before God. And this every moment sends him to Christ. This shews him the meaning of what is written, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, Holiness to the Lord. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead," (the type of our great High-Priest) "that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts:" (so far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the rest of our sins!) "And it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord," Exod. xxviii. 36, 38.

6. To explain this by a single instance. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill," and hereby, (as our Lord teaches,) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come short of it: and the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of his blood to atone for all my sin: and of his Spirit to purify my heart, and to make me "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

7. Therefore, I cannot spare the law one moment, any more than I can spare Christ: seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Christ, as ever I wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwise, this "evil heart of unbelief," would immediately "depart from the living God." Indeed, each is continually sending me to the other, the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law, constrain me to fly to the Love of God in Christ. On the other, the Love of God in Christ, endears the law to me "above gold or precious stones:" seeing I know every part of it, is a gracious promise, which my Lord will fulfil in its season.

8. Who art thou, then, O man! that "judgest the law, and speakest evil of the law?" That rankest it with sin, Satan, and death, and sendest them all to hell together? The Apostle James esteemed *judging* or *speaking evil of the law*, so enormous a piece of wickedness, that he knew not how to aggravate the guilt of judging our Brethren, more than by shewing it includes this. "So now," says he, "thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge!" A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee. So thou hast set up thyself in the judgment-seat of Christ, and cast down the rule, whereby he will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee! And for the time to come, never think or speak lightly of, much less dress up as a scare-crow, this blessed instrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the sake of him from whom it came, and of him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the cross of Christ. Declare its praise, and make it honourable before all men.

9. And if thou art thoroughly convinced, That it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all his amiable perfections, and that it *is holy, and just, and good*, but especially to them that believe; then instead of casting it away as a polluted thing, see that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness, and purity, forsake thee. "Bind it about thy neck; write it on the table of thy heart." Keep close to the law, if thou wilt keep close to Christ: hold it fast: let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all the "righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee," and thou art "filled with all the fulness of God."

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled his word, if he hath already "written his law in thy heart," then "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free." Thou art not only made free from the Jewish ceremonies, from the guilt of sin, and the fear of hell: (these are so far from being the whole, that they are the least and lowest part of Christian liberty:) but what is infinitely more, from

the power of sin, from serving the devil, from offending God. O stand fast in this liberty, in comparison of which, all the rest is not even worthy to be named. Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving him with all thy strength. This is perfect freedom; thus to keep his law, and to walk in all his commandments blameless. "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." I do not mean of Jewish bondage: nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: these, I trust, are far from thee. But beware of being entangled again with the yoke of sin, of any inward or outward transgression of the law. Abhor sin far more than death or hell; abhor sin itself, far more than the punishment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of desire, of anger; of every evil temper, or word, or work. "Look unto Jesus," and in order thereto, *look* more and more "into the perfect law, the law of liberty:" and "continue therein:" so shalt thou daily "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XXXVII.

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE LAW ESTABLISHED THROUGH FAITH.

ROMANS III. 31.

"Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the Law."

1. ST. PAUL having in the beginning of this Epistle, laid down his general proposition, namely, That "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth:" the powerful mean, whereby God makes every believer a partaker of present and eternal salvation, goes on to shew, that there is no other way under heaven, whereby men can be saved. He speaks particularly of salvation from the guilt of sin, which he commonly terms justification. And that all men stood in need of this, that none could plead their own innocence, he proves at large by various arguments, addressed to the Jews as well as the Heathens. Hence he infers, (in the 19th verse of this chapter) *That every mouth*, whether of Jew or Heathen, must be *stopt* from excusing or justifying himself, "and all the world become guilty before God." "Therefore," saith he, by his own obedience, "by the works of the law, shall no man be justified in his sight," ver. 20. "But now the righteousness of God without the law," without our previous obedience thereto, "is manifested," ver. 21. "Even

the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe," ver. 22. "For there is no difference," as to their need of justification, or the manner wherein they attain it. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," ver. 23, the glorious image of God wherein they were created: and all (who attain) "are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," ver. 24. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood," ver. 25. "That he might be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," ver. 26; that without any impeachment to his justice, he might shew him mercy, for the sake of that propitiation. "Therefore, we conclude," (which was the grand position he had undertaken to establish) that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law," ver. 28.

2. It was easy to foresee an objection which might be made, and which has in fact been made in all ages: namely, That to say "we are justified without the works of the law," is to abolish the law. The Apostle, without entering into a formal dispute, simply denies the charge. "Do we then," says he, "make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

3. The strange imagination of some, that St. Paul, when he says, "A man is justified without the works of the law," means only the ceremonial law, is abundantly confuted by these very words. For did St. Paul establish the ceremonial law? It is evident, he did not. He did make void that law through faith, and openly avowed his doing so. It was the Moral Law only of which he might truly say, We do not make void but establish this through faith.

4. But all men are not herein of his mind. Many there are who will not agree to this. Many in all ages of the Church, even among those who bore the name of Christians, have contended, That, "the faith once delivered to the saints," was designed to make void the whole law. They would no more spare the moral than the ceremonial law, but were for *hewing*, as it were, *both in pieces before the*

Lord: vehemently maintaining, "If you establish any law, Christ shall profit you nothing: Christ is become of none effect to you: ye are fallen from grace."

5. But is the zeal of these men according to knowledge? Have they observed the connexion between the law and faith? And that considering that close connexion between them, to destroy one is indeed to destroy both? That, to abolish the moral law, is in truth, to abolish faith and the law together? As leaving no proper mean, either of bringing us to faith, or of *stirring up that gift of God* in our soul.

6. It, therefore, behoves all who desire either to come to Christ, or to "walk in him, whom they have received," to take heed how they "make void the law through faith;" to secure us effectually against which, let us enquire, first, Which are the most effectual ways of "making void the law through faith;" and, secondly, How we may follow the Apostle, and by faith "establish the law."

I. 1. Let us, first, enquire, What are the most usual ways of "making void the law through faith." Now the way for a preacher to make it all void at a stroke, is, not to preach it at all. This is just the same thing as to blot it out of the Oracles of God. More especially when it is done with design: when it is made a rule, "Not to preach the law:" and the very phrase, "A Preacher of the law," is used as a term of reproach, as though it meant little less than "an enemy to the gospel."

2. All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the nature, properties, and use of the law: and proves that those who act thus, either know not Christ, are utter strangers to the living faith, or at least, that they are but babes in Christ, and as such "unskilled in the word of righteousness."

3. Their grand plea is this: "That preaching the gospel" that is, according to their judgment, the speaking of nothing but the sufferings and merits of Christ, "answers all the ends of the law." But this we utterly deny. It does not answer the very first end of the law, namely, The convincing men of sin, the awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell. There may have been here and

there an exempt case. One in a thousand may have been awakened by the gospel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God, is to convict sinners by the law, and that only. The gospel is not the mean which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himself used for this end. We have no authority in Scripture for applying it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. Nor have we any more ground to expect this, from the nature of the thing. "They that be whole," as our Lord himself observes, "need not a physician, but they that be sick." It is absurd, therefore, to offer a physician to them that are whole, or that at least imagine themselves so to be. You are first, to convince them, that they are sick. Otherwise they will not thank you for your labour. It is equally absurd to offer Christ to them, whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is, in the proper sense, "casting pearls before swine." Doubtless, "they will trample them under foot." And it it no more than you have reason to expect, if they also "turn again and rend you."

4. "But although there is no command in scripture, to offer Christ to the careless sinner, yet are there not scriptural precedents for it?" I think not: I know not any. I believe you cannot produce one, either from the four Evangelists, or the Acts of the Apostles. Neither can you prove this to have been the practice of any of the Apostles, from any passage in all their writings.

5. "Nay, does not the Apostle Paul say, in his former Epistle to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified?" chap. i. 23. And in his latter, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord?" chap. v. ver. 4.

We consent to rest the cause on this issue: to tread in his steps, to follow his example. Only preach you, just as St. Paul preached, and the dispute is at an end.

For although we are certain he *preached Christ*, in as perfect a manner as the very chief of the Apostles, yet who *preached the law* more than St. Paul? Therefore, he did not think the gospel answered the same end.

6. The very first sermon of St. Paul's, which is recorded,

concludes in these words: "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. For I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you," Acts xiii. 39, &c. Now it is manifest, all this is *preaching the law*, in the sense wherein you understand the term: even although great part of, if not all his hearers, were either *Jews, or religious proselytes*, ver. 43, and, therefore, probably many of them, in some degree at least, convinced of sin already. He first reminds them, That they could not be justified by the law of Moses, but only by faith in Christ: and then severely threatens them with the judgments of God, which is, in the strongest sense, *preaching the law*.

7. In his next discourse, that to the heathens at Lystra, Acts xiv. 15, &c. we do not find so much as the name of Christ. The whole purport of it is, That they should "turn from those vain idols, unto the living God." Now confess the truth. Do not you think, if you had been there, you could have preached much better than he? I should not wonder, if you thought too, That his *preaching so ill*, occasioned his being *so ill treated*: and that his being *stoned*, was a just judgment upon him, for not *preaching Christ!*

8. To the jailer indeed, when "he sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?" he immediately said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xvi. 29, &c. And in the case of one so deeply convinced of sin, who would not have said the same? But to the men of Athens you find him speaking in a quite different manner, reproving their superstition, ignorance, and idolatry; and strongly moving them to repent, from the consideration of a future judgment, and of the resurrection from the dead, chap. xvii. 24—31. Likewise, *when Felix sent for Paul*, on purpose that he might *hear him concerning the faith in Christ;* instead of preaching Christ in *your* sense (which would probably have caused the Governor, either to contra-

dict and blaspheme) *he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*," till Felix, (hardened as he was,) *trembled*, chap. xxiv. 24, 25. Go thou and tread in his steps. *Preach* Christ to the careless sinner, by *reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come!*

9. If you say, "But he *preached Christ* in a different manner in his Epistles." I answer, He did not there preach at all: not in that sense wherein we speak: for preaching in our present question, means, speaking before a congregation.

But waving this. I answer, 2, His Epistles are directed, not to unbelievers, such as those we are now speaking of, but *to the saints of God in* Rome, Corinth, Philippi, and other places. Now, unquestionably, he would speak more of Christ to these, than to those who were without God in the world. And yet, 3, Every one of these is full of the law, even the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; in both of which he does what you term preaching the law; and that to believers as well as unbelievers.

10. From hence it is plain, you know not what it is, to *preach Christ*, in the sense of the Apostle. For, doubtless, St. Paul judged himself to be *preaching Christ*, both to Felix, and at Antioch, Lystra, and Athens. From whose example every thinking man must infer, That not only the declaring the love of Christ to sinners, but also the declaring that he will come from heaven in flaming fire, is, in the Apostle's sense, *preaching Christ:* yea, in the full scriptural meaning of the word. To *preach Christ*, is, To preach what he hath revealed either in the Old or New Testament; so that you are then as really preaching Christ, when you are saying, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God," as when you are saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?"

11. Consider this well; that to *preach Christ*, is to preach all things that Christ hath spoken; all his promises, all his threatenings and commands; all that is written in his

book. And then you will know how to preach Christ, without making void the law.

12. "But does not the greatest blessing attend those discourses, wherein we peculiarly preach the merits and sufferings of Christ?"

Probably, when we preach to a congregation of mourners, or of believers, these will be attended with the greatest blessing: because such discourses are peculiarly suited to their state. At least, these will usually convey the most comfort. But this is not always the greatest blessing. I may sometimes receive a far greater, by a discourse that cuts me to the heart, and humbles me to the dust. Neither should I receive that comfort, if I were to preach or hear no discourses but on the sufferings of Christ. These, by the constant repetition, would lose their force, and grow more and more flat and dead, till at length they would become a dull round of words, without any spirit, or life, or virtue. So that thus to *preach Christ*, must, in process of time, make void the gospel as well as the law.

II. 1. A second way of "making void the law through faith," is, the teaching that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness. This divides itself into a thousand smaller paths, and many there are that walk therein. Indeed there are few that wholly escape it: few who are convinced, we "are saved by faith," but are sooner or later, more or less, drawn aside into this by-way.

2. All those are drawn into this by-way, who, if it be not their settled judgment, that faith in Christ entirely sets aside the necessity of keeping his law, yet suppose either, 1, That holiness is less necessary now than it was before Christ: or, 2, That a less degree of it is necessary; or, 3, That it is less necessary to believers than to others. Yea, and so are all those, who although their judgment be right in the general, yet think they may take more liberty in particular cases, than they could have done before they believed. Indeed, the using the term *liberty*, in such a manner, for *liberty from obedience or holiness*, shews at once,

that their judgment is perverted, and that they are guilty of what they imagined to be far from them, namely, of "making void the law through faith," by supposing faith to supersede holiness.

3. The first plea of those who teach this expressly, is, that "we are now under the covenant of grace, not works: and, therefore, we are no longer under the necessity of performing the works of the law."

And who ever was under the covenant of works? None but Adam before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, universal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance; and left no place for pardon, upon the very least transgression. But no man else was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Christ nor since. All his sons were and are under the covenant of grace; the manner of their acceptance is this: the free grace of God thro' the merits of Christ, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with such a faith as, working by love, produces all obedience and holiness.

4. The case is not, therefore, as you suppose, that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to work the works of his law, than they are *now*. This is a supposition you cannot make good. But, we should have been obliged, if we had been under the covenant of works, to have done those works antecedent to our acceptance. Whereas, now all good works, tho' as necessary as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance, but consequent upon it. Therefore, the nature of the covenant of grace gives you no ground, no encouragement at all, to set aside any instance or degree of obedience, any part or measure of holiness.

5. But are we not "justified by faith, without the works of the law?" Undoubtedly we are, without the works either of the ceremonial or the moral law. And would to God all men were convinced of this! It would prevent innumerable evils. Antinomianism, in particular; for generally speaking, they are the Pharisees who make the Antinomians. Running into an extreme so palpably contrary to Scripture, they occasion others to run into the opposite one.

These, seeking to be justified by works, affright those from allowing any place for them.

6. But the truth lies between both. We are, doubtless, *justified by faith.* This is the corner-stone of the whole christian building. We are "justified without the works of the law," as any previous condition of justification. But they are an immediate fruit of that faith, whereby we are justified. So that if good works do not follow our faith, even all inward and outward holiness, it is plain our faith is nothing worth: we are yet in our sins. Therefore, that "we are justified by faith," even by "faith without works," is no ground for "making void the law through faith:" or for imagining that faith is a dispensation from any kind or degree of holiness.

7. "Nay, but does not St. Paul expressly say, 'Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?' And does it not follow from hence, That faith is to a believer in the room, in the place of righteousness? But if faith is in the room of righteousness or holiness, what need is there of this too?"

This it must be acknowledged, comes home to the point, and is indeed, the main pillar of Antinomianism. And yet it needs not a long or laboured answer. We allow, 1, That God *justifies the ungodly*, him that, till that hour, is totally ungodly, full of all evil, void of all good. 2, That he justifies *the ungodly that worketh not*, that, till that moment, worketh no good work; neither can he; for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. 3, That he justifies him *by faith alone*, without any goodness or righteousness preceding: and, 4, That *faith is* then *counted to him for righteousness*, namely, for *preceding righteousness*: i. e. God, through the merits of Christ, accepts him that believes, as if he had already fulfilled all righteousness. But what is all this to your point? The Apostle does not say, either here or elsewhere, That this faith is counted to him for *subsequent righteousness*. He does teach, That there is no righteousness *before* faith. But where does he teach,

That there is none *after it?* He does assert, Holiness cannot *precede* justification: But not, That it need not *follow* it. St. Paul, therefore, gives you no colour for "making void the law," by teaching that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness.

III. 1. There is yet another way of "making void the law through faith," which is more common than either of the former. And that is, The doing it practically: the making it void in *fact*, though not in *principle*: the *living*, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness.

How earnestly does the Apostle guard us against this, in those well known words: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?—God forbid!" Rom. vi. 15. A caution which it is needful thoroughly to consider, because it is of the last importance.

2. The being *under the law*, may here mean, 1, The being obliged to keep the ceremonial law. 2, The being obliged to conform to the whole Mosaic institution. 3, The being obliged to keep the whole moral law, as the condition of our acceptance with God: and, 4, The being under the wrath and curse of God, under the sentence of eternal death; under a sense of guilt and condemnation, full of horror and slavish fear.

3. Now, although a believer is "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ," yet from the moment he believes, he is not *under the law*, in any of the preceding senses. On the contrary, he is *under grace*, under a more benign, gracious dispensation. As he is no longer under the ceremonial law, nor under the Mosaic institution; as he is not obliged to keep even the moral law, as the condition of his acceptance: so he is delivered from the wrath and curse of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell, whereby he was *all his life* before *subject to bondage*. And he now performs (which while *under the law* he could not do) a willing and universal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, The grace of God ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love.

4. What then? Shall this evangelical principle of action, be less powerful than the legal? Shall we be less obedient to God from filial love, than we were from servile fear?

It is well, if this is not a common case; if this practical Antinomianism, this unobserved way of "making void the law through faith," has not infected thousands of believers.

Has it not infected you? Examine yourself honestly and closely. Do you not do now, what you durst not have done when you were *under the law*, or (as we commonly call it) *under conviction*? For instance. You durst not then indulge yourself in food. You took just what was needful, and that of the cheapest kind. Do you not allow yourself more latitude now? Do you not indulge yourself a *little* more than you did? O beware, lest you "sin, because you are not under the law, but under grace!"

5. When you were under conviction, you durst not indulge the lust of the eye in any degree. You would not do any thing, great or small, merely to gratify your curiosity. You regarded only cleanliness and necessity, or at most very modertae convenience, either in furniture or apparel; superfluity and finery of whatever kind, as well as fashionable elegance, were both a terror and an abomination to you.

Are they so still? Is your conscience as tender now in these things, as it was then? Do you still follow the same rule both in furniture and apparel, trampling all finery, all superfluity, every thing useless, every thing merely ornamental, however fashionable, underfoot? Rather, Have you not resumed what you had once laid aside, and what you could not then use without wounding your conscience? And have you not learned to say, "O, I am not so scrupulous now?" I would to God you were! Then you would not *sin* thus, "because you are not under the law, but under grace."

6. You were once scrupulous too of commending any to their face, and still more, of suffering any to commend you. It was a stab to your heart: you could not bear it: you

sought the honour that cometh of God only. You could not endure such conversation: nor any conversation which was not good to the use of edifying. All idle talk, all trifling discourse you abhorred, you hated as well as feared it, being deeply sensible of the value of time, of every precious, fleeting moment. In like manner, you dreaded and abhorred idle expense: valuing your money only less than your time, and trembling lest you should be found an unfaithful steward even of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Do you now look upon praise as deadly poison, which you can neither give nor receive but at the peril of your soul? Do you still dread and abhor all conversation, which does not tend to the use of edifying; and labour to improve every moment, that it may not pass without leaving you better than it found you? Are not you less careful as to the expense both of money and time? Cannot you now lay out either, as you could not have done once? Alas! How has that "which should have been for your health, proved to you an occasion of falling!" How have you "sinned because you were not under the law, but under grace!"

7. God forbid you should any longer continue thus to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness!" O remember, how clear and strong a conviction you once had, concerning all these things. And, at the same time, you were fully satisfied, from whom that conviction came. The world told you, you were in a delusion: but you knew, it was the voice of God. In these things you were not too scrupulous then; but you are not now scrupulous enough. God kept you longer in that painful school, that you might learn those great lessons the more perfectly. And have you forgot them already? O recollect them before it be too late. Have you suffered so many things in vain? I trust, it is not yet in vain. Now use the conviction without the pain: practise the lesson without the rod. Let not the mercy of God weigh less with you now, than his fiery indignation did before. Is love a less powerful motive than fear? If not, let it be an invariable rule, "I will do nothing now I

am *under grace*, which I durst not have done when *under the law*."

8. I cannot conclude this head, without exhorting you to examine yourself, likewise, touching sins of omission. Are you as clear of these, now *you are under grace*, as you were when *under the law?* How diligently were you then in hearing the word of God? Did you neglect any opportunity? Did you not attend thereon day and night? Would a small hindrance have kept you away? A little business? A visitant? A slight indisposition? A soft bed? A dark or cold morning?—Did not you then fast often? Or use abstinence to the utmost of your power? Were not you much in prayer, (cold and heavy as you were) while you were hanging over the mouth of hell? Did you not speak and not spare even for an unknown God? Did you not boldly plead his cause?—Reprove sinners?—And avow the truth before an adulterous generation? And are you now a believer in Christ? Have you the "faith that overcometh the world?" What! and are you less zealous for your Master now, than you were when you knew him not? Less diligent in fasting, in prayer, in hearing his word, in calling sinners to God? O repent. See and feel your grievous loss! Remember from whence you are fallen! Bewail your unfaithfulness! Now be zealous and do the first works; lest, if you continue to *make void the law through faith*, God cut you off, and *appoint* you your *portion with the unbelievers!*

SERMON XXXVIII.

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE LAW ESTABLISHED THROUGH FAITH.

ROMANS III. 31.

"Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law."

1. IT has been shewn in the preceding Discourse, which are the most usual ways of "making void the law through faith:" namely, First, The not preaching it at all, which effectually makes it all void at a stroke; and this under colour of *preaching Christ* and magnifying the gospel, though it be in truth, destroying both the one and the other: Secondly, The teaching (whether directly or indirectly) that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness: that this is less necessary now, or a less degree of it necessary, than before Christ came: that it is less necessary to us, because we believe, than otherwise it would have been: or that Christian liberty is a liberty from any kind or degree of holiness: (so perverting those great truths, that we are now under the "covenant of grace, and not of works: that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law: and that to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness:") Or, Thirdly, The doing this practically; the making void the law in practise, though not in principle: the living or acting as if faith were designed to excuse us from holiness: the allowing ourselves in sin, "because we

are not under the law, but under grace." It remains to enquire, How we may follow a better pattern, how we may be able to say with the Apostle, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

2. We do not, indeed, establish the old ceremonial law: we know that is abolished for ever. Much less do we establish the whole Mosaic dispensation. This, we know, our Lord has *nailed to his cross*. Nor yet do we so establish the moral law (which it is to be feared, too many do) as if the fulfilling it, the keeping all the commandments, were the condition of our justification. If it were so, surely "in his sight should no man living be justified." But all this being allowed, we still, in the Apostle's sense, *establish the law*, the moral law.

I. 1. We *establish the law*, First, By our doctrine: by endeavouring to preach it in its whole extent, to explain and enforce every part of it, in the same manner as our great Teacher did, while upon earth. We establish it, by following St. Peter's advice, "If any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God;" as the holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghost, spoke and wrote for our instruction, and as the Apostles of our blessed Lord, by the direction of the same Spirit. We establish it whenever we speak in his name, by keeping back nothing from them that hear; by declaring to them, without any limitation or reserve, the whole counsel of God. And in order the more effectually to establish it, we use herein great plainness of speech. "We are not as many that *corrupt* the word of God," καπηλευοντες· (as artful men their bad wines,) we do not *cauponize*, *mix*, *adulterate*, or *soften* it, to make it suit the taste of the hearers. "But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ;" as having no other aim, than "by manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

2. We then, by our doctrine, establish the law, when we thus openly declare it to all men: and that in the fulness

wherein it is delivered by our blessed Lord and his Apostles: when we publish it in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. We then establish the law, when we declare every part of it, every commandment contained therein, not only in its full, literal sense, but likewise in its spiritual meaning: not only with regard to the outward actions, which it either forbids or enjoins: but also with respect to the inward principle, to the thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart.

3. And indeed this we do the more diligently, not only because it is of the deepest importance; inasmuch as all the fruit, every word and work, must be only evil continually, if the tree be evil, if the dispositions and tempers of the heart, be not right before God; but likewise, because as important as these things are, they are little considered or understood. So little, that we may truly say of the law too, when taken in its full spiritual meaning, It is "a mystery which was hidden from ages and generations since the world began." It was utterly hidden from the heathen world. They, with all their boasted wisdom, neither *found out God*, nor the law of God, not in the letter, much less in the spirit of it. *Their foolish hearts were* more and more *darkened;* while *professing themselves wise, they became fools.* And it was almost equally hidden, as to its spiritual meaning, from the bulk of the Jewish nation. Even those who were so ready to declare concerning others, "this people that know not the law is accursed, pronounced their own sentence therein, as being under the same curse, the same dreadful ignorance. Witness our Lord's continual reproof of the wisest among them, for their gross misrepresentations of it. Witness the supposition almost universally received among them, that they needed only to make clean the outside of the cup: that the paying tythe of mint, annise, and cummin, outward exactness would atone for inward unholiness; for the total neglect both of justice and mercy; of faith and the love of God. Yea, so absolutely was the spiritual meaning of the law hidden from the wisest of them, that one of their most eminent Rabbi's comments thus, on

those words of the Psalmist, "If I incline unto iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" that is, saith he, "if it be only in my heart, if I do not commit outward wickedness, the Lord will not regard it; he will not punish me, unless I proceed to the outward act!"

4. But, alas! the law of God, as to its inward spiritual meaning, is not hidden from the Jews or Heathens only, but even from what is called the Christian world; at least, from a vast majority of them. The spiritual sense of the commandments of God, is still a mystery to these also. Nor is this observable only in those lands, which are overspread with Romish darkness and ignorance. But this is too sure, that the far greater part, even of those who are called *Reformed Christians*, are utter strangers at this day to the law of Christ, in the purity and spirituality of it.

5. Hence it is that to this day "the Scribes and Pharisees," the men who have the form, but not the power of Religion, and who are generally wise in their own conceits; "hearing these things are offended:" are deeply offended, when we speak of the Religion of the heart, and particularly when we shew, that without this, were we to "give all our goods to feed the poor," it would profit us nothing. But offended they must be: for we cannot but speak the truth as it is in Jesus. It is our part, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to deliver our own souls. All that is written in the Book of God we are to declare, not as pleasing men, but the Lord. We are to declare, not only all the promises, but all the threatenings too which we find therein. At the same time that we proclaim all the blessings and privileges, which God had prepared for his children, we are likewise to "teach all the things, whatsoever he hath commanded." And we know, that all these have their use; either for the awakening those that sleep, the instructing the ignorant, the comforting the feeble-minded, or the building up and perfecting of the saints. We know that "all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable" either "for doctrine," or "for reproof," either "for correction or for instruction in righteousness:" and

"that the man of God," in the process of the work of God in his soul, has need of every part thereof, that he may at length "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

6. It is our part, thus to *preach Christ*, by preaching all things whatsoever he hath revealed. We may, indeed, without blame, yea, and with a peculiar blessing from God, declare the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may speak, in a more especial manner, of "the Lord our Righteousness." We may expatiate upon the grace of *God in Christ*, "reconciling the world unto himself." We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praise, as "bearing the iniquities of us all, as wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that by his stripes we might be healed." But still we should not *preach Christ*, according to his word, if we were wholly to confine ourselves to this. We are not ourselves clear before God, unless we proclaim him in all his offices. *To preach Christ*, as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, is to preach him, not only as our great High-Priest, "taken from among men, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God;" as such, "reconciling us to God by his blood," and "ever living to make intercession for us:" but likewise as the Prophet of the Lord, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." Who by his Word and his Spirit, *is with us always;* "guiding us into all truth:" yea, and as remaining a king for ever; as giving laws to all whom he has bought with his blood; as restoring those to the image of God, whom he had first reinstated in his favour: as reigning in all believing hearts until he has "subdued all things to himself;" until he hath utterly cast out all sin, and "brought in everlasting righteousness."

II. 1. *We establish the law*, Secondly, when we so preach faith in Christ, as not to supersede, but produce holiness: to produce all manner of holiness, negative and positive, of the heart and of the life.

In order to this, we continually declare, (what should be frequently and deeply considered, by all who would not

"make void the law through faith,") that faith itself, even Christian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, still is only the handmaid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone: Love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world, to the consummation of all things. And it will endure when heaven and earth flee away; for *love* alone *never faileth*. Faith will totally fail: it will be swallowed up in sight, the everlasting vision of God. But even then, love—

"Its nature and its office still the same,
Lasting its lamp and unconsum'd its flame,
In deathless triumph shall for ever live,
And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive."

2. Very excellent things are spoken of faith, and whosoever is a partaker thereof, may well say with the Apostle, "Thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift." Yet still it loses all its excellence, when brought into a comparison with love. What St. Paul observes concerning the superior glory of the gospel, above that of the law, may, with great propriety, be spoken of the superior glory of love, above that of faith. "Even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory." Yea, all the glory of faith, before it is done away, arises hence, that it ministers to love. It is the great temporary mean which God has ordained to promote that eternal end.

3. Let those who magnify faith beyond all proportion, so as to swallow up all things else, and who so totally misapprehend the nature of it, as to imagine it stands in the place of love, consider farther, That as love will exist after faith, so it did exist long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation, beheld the face of their Father that is in heaven, had no occasion for faith, in its ge-

neral notion, as it is the evidence of things not seen. Neither had they need of faith, in its more particular acceptation, faith in the blood of Jesus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels; but only the seed of Abraham. There was, therefore, no place before the foundation of the world, for faith, either in the general or particular sense. But there was for love. Love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator, to exist, and to love.

4. Nor is it certain (as ingeniously and plausibly as many have descanted upon this,) That faith, even in the general sense of the word, had any place in paradise. It is highly probable, from that short and uncircumstantial account which we have in Holy Writ, That Adam before he rebelled against God, walked with him by sight and not by faith.

> "For then his Reason's eye was strong and clear,
> And as an eagle can behold the sun,
> Might have beheld his Maker's face as near,
> As th' intellectual angels could have done."

He was then able to talk with him face to face, whose face we cannot now see and live. And consequently had no need of that faith, whose office it is, to supply the want of sight.

5. On the other hand, it is absolutely certain, faith, in its particular sense, had then no place. For in that sense it necessarily presupposes sin, and the wrath of God declared against the sinner; without which there is no need of an atonement for sin, in order to the sinner's reconciliation with God. Consequently, as there was no need of an atonement before the fall, so there was no place for faith in that atonement. Man being then pure from every stain of sin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in him without a rival. And it was only when love was lost by sin, that faith was added, not for its own sake, nor with any design, that it should exist any longer,

than until it had answered the end for which it was ordained, namely, To restore man to the love from which he was fallen. At the fall therefore was added this evidence of things unseen, which before was utterly needless: this confidence in redeeming love, which could not possibly have any place, till the promise was made, that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the serpent's head.

6. Faith then was originally designed of God, to re-establish the law of love. Therefore, in speaking thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it of its due praise: but on the contrary, shewing its real worth, exalting it in its just proportion, and giving it that very place which the wisdom of God assigned it from the beginning. It is the grand mean of restoring that holy love, wherein man was originally created. It follows, that although faith is of no value in itself (as neither is any other means whatsoever) yet as it leads to that end, the establishing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the present state of things, it is the only mean under heaven for effecting it; it is on that account an unspeakable blessing to man, and of unspeakable value before God.

III. 1. And this naturally brings us to observe, Thirdly, The most important way of *establishing the law:* namely, The establishing it in our own hearts and lives. Indeed without this, what would all the rest avail? We might establish it by our doctrine; we might preach it in its whole extent, might explain and inforce every part of it. We might open it in its most spiritual meaning, and declare the mysteries of the kingdom: we might preach Christ in all his offices, and faith in Christ, as opening all the treasures of his love. And yet all this time, if the law we preached, were not established in our hearts, we should be of no more account before God, than "sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals." All our preaching would be so far from profiting ourselves, that it would only increase our damnation.

2. This is, therefore, the main point to be considered, How may we establish the law in our own hearts, so that it may

have its full influence on our lives? And this can only be done by faith.

Faith alone it is, which effectually answers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For so long as we walk by faith, not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness. While we steadily look, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, we are more and more crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us. Let but the eye of the soul be constantly fixed, not on the things which are temporal, but on those which are eternal, and our affections are more and more loosened from earth, and fixed on things above. So that faith, in general, is the most direct and effectual mean of promoting all righteousness and true holiness: of establishing the holy and spiritual law, in the hearts of them that believe.

3. And by faith, taken in its more particular meaning, for a confidence in a pardoning God, we establish his law in our own hearts, in a still more effectual manner. For there are no motives which so powerfully incline us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this, to give our hearts to him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful love to God, arises love to our brother also. Neither can we avoid loving our neighbour, if we truly believe the love wherewith God hath loved us. Now this love to man, grounded on faith and love to God, *worketh no ill to* our *neighbour*. Consequently, it is, (as the Apostle observes,) *the fulfilling of the* whole negative *law*. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Neither is love content with barely working no evil to our neighbour. It continually incites us to do good: as we have time, and opportunity, to do good in every possible kind, and in every possible degree, to all men. It is, therefore, the fulfilling of the positive likewise, as well as of the negative law of God.

4. Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only: but it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. Every one that hath this faith in himself, "purifieth himself even as he is pure:" purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate affections: yea, from the whole of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness, and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light, even as God is in the light.

5. Let us thus endeavour to establish the law in ourselves: not sinning *because we are under grace*, but rather using all the power we receive thereby, *to fulfil all righteousness*. Calling to mind, what light we received from God, while his Spirit was convincing us of sin, let us beware we do not put out that light: what we then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume any thing, small or great, which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God, or the profit of our own soul: or to neglect any thing, small or great, which we could not then neglect, without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before, let us now add the light of faith. Confirm we the former gift of God, by a deeper sense of whatever he had then shewn us: by a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exqiusite sensibility of sin. Walking now with joy and not with fear, in a clear, steady sight of things eternal, we shall look on pleasure, wealth, praise, all the things of earth, as on bubbles upon the water: counting nothing important, nothing desirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is "within the vail, where Jesus sitteth at the right-hand of God."

6. Can *you* say, "Thou art merciful to my unrighteousness: my sins thou rememberest no more?" Then, for the time to come, see that you flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent. For how exceedingly sinful does it appear to you now! How heinous above all expression! On the

er hand, in how amiable a light do you now see the holy perfect will of God? Now, therefore, labour that it fulfilled, both in you, by you, and upon you. Now ch and pray that you may sin no more, that you may and shun the least transgression of his law. You see motes which you could not see before, as when the sun es into a dark place. In like manner, you see the sins ich you could not see before, now the Sun of Righteous- s shines in your heart. Now then give all diligence to k in every respect, according to the light you have re- ved. Now be zealous to receive more light daily, more the knowledge and love of God, more of the Spirit of rist, more of his life, and of the power of his resurrec- n. Now use all the knowledge, and love, and life, and ver you have already attained. So shall you continually on from faith to faith. So shall you daily increase in y love, till faith be swallowed up in sight, and the law love be established to all eternity.

SERMON XXXIX.

THE NATURE OF ENTHUSIASM.

ACTS XXVI. 24.

"*And Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, Thou art beside thyself.*"

1. AND so say all the world, the men who know not God, of all that are of Paul's Religion; of every one who is so a follower of him, as he was of Christ. It is true, there is a sort of Religion, nay, and it is called Christianity too, which may be practised without any such imputation, which is generally allowed to be consistent with common sense. That is, a Religion of form, a round of outward duties, performed in a decent, regular manner. You may add orthodoxy thereto, a system of right opinions, yea, and some qualities of heathen morality. And yet not many will pronounce, That "much Religion hath made you mad." But if you aim at the Religion of the heart, if you talk of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it will not be long before your sentence be passed, "Thou art beside thyself."

2. And it is no compliment which the men of the world pay you herein. They, for once, mean what they say. They not only affirm, but cordially believe, That every man is "beside himself," who says, The love of God is shed

abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, and that God has enabled him to rejoice in Christ, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. If a man be indeed alive to God, and dead to all things here below; if he continually see him that is invisible, and accordingly walk by faith and not by sight: then they account it a clear case; beyond all dispute, "much Religion hath made him mad."

3. It is easy to observe, That the determinate thing which the world accounts madness, is that utter contempt of all temporal things, and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favour of God; that happy, holy love of God; and that testimony of his Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God. That is, in truth, the whole spirit, and life, and power of the Religion of Jesus Christ.

4. They will, however, allow, in other respects, the man acts and talks like one in his senses. In other things, he is a reasonable man: it is in these instances only his head is touched. It is, therefore, acknowledged, that the madness under which he labours, is of a particular kind. And accordingly they are accustomed to distinguish it by a particular name, *Enthusiasm.*

5. A term this, which is exceeding frequently used, which is scarcely ever out of some men's mouths. And yet it is exceeding rarely understood, even by those who use it most. It may be, therefore, not unacceptable to serious men, to all who desire to understand what they speak or hear, if I endeavour to explain the meaning of this term, to shew what Enthusiasm is. It may be an encouragement to those who are unjustly charged therewith: and may possibly be of use, to some who are justly charged with it, at least to others, who might be so, were they not cautioned against it.

6. As to the word itself, it is generally allowed to be of Greek extraction. But whence the Greek word ενθουσιασμος, is derived, none has yet been able to shew. Some have endeavoured to derive it from εν Θεω, *in God*, because all Enthusiasm has reference to Him. But this is quite forced: there being small resemblance between the word derived,

and those they strive to derive it from. Others would derive it from εν θυσια, *in sacrifice*, because many of the Enthusiasts of old, were affected in the most violent manner, during the time of sacrifice. Perhaps it is a fictitious word, invented from the noise, which some of those made who were so affected.

7. It is not improbable, that one reason why this uncouth word has been retained in so many languages, was because men were not better agreed, concerning the meaning than concerning the derivation of it. They, therefore, adopted the Greek word, because they did not understand it: they did not translate it into their own tongues, because they knew not how to translate it: it having been always a word of a loose uncertain sense, to which no determinate meaning was affixed.

8. It is not, therefore, at all surprising, that it is so variously taken at this day: different persons understanding it in different senses, quite inconsistent with each other. Some take it in a good sense, for a divine impulse or impression, superior to all the natural faculties, and suspending for the time, either in whole or in part, both the reason and the outward senses. In this meaning of the word, both the Prophets of old, and the Apostles were proper Enthusiasts: being, at divers times, so filled with the Spirit, and so influenced by him who dwelt in their hearts, that the exercise of their own reason, their senses, and all their natural faculties being suspended, they were wholly actuated by the power of God, and *spake* only *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

9. Others take the word in an indifferent sense, such as is neither morally good nor evil: Thus they speak of the Enthusiasm of the Poets; of Homer and Virgil in particular. And this a late eminent writer, extends so far as to assert, there is no man excellent in his profession, whatsoever it be, who has not in his temper, a strong tincture of Enthusiasm. By Enthusiasm these appear to understand, an uncommon vigour of thought, a peculiar fervour of spirit, a vivacity and strength not to be found among com-

mon men: elevating the soul to greater and higher things; than cool reason could have attained.

10. But neither of these is the sense wherein the word Enthusiasm is most usually understood. The generality of men, if no farther agreed, at least agree thus far concerning it, That it is something evil: and this is plainly the sentiment of all those, who call the Religion of the heart, Enthusiasm. Accordingly I shall take it in the following pages, as an evil; a misfortune, if not a fault.

11. As to the nature of Enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly, a disorder of the mind; and such a disorder, as greatly hinders the exercise of reason. Nay, sometimes, it wholly sets it aside: it not only dims, but shuts the eye of the understanding. It may, therefore, well be accounted a species of madness; of madness rather than of folly: seeing a fool is properly one who draws wrong conclusions from right premises: whereas, a madman draws right conclusions, but from wrong premises. And so does an Enthusiast. Suppose his premises true, and his conclusions would necessarily follow. But here lies his mistake, his premises are false. He imagines himself to be what he is not. And therefore, setting out wrong, the farther he goes, the more he wanders out of the way.

12. Every enthusiast, then, is properly a madman. Yet his is not an ordinary, but a religious madness. By religious, I do not mean, that it is any part of Religion: quite the reverse. Religion is the spirit of a sound mind: and consequently stands in direct opposition to madness of every kind. But I mean, it has Religion for its object; it is conversant about Religion. And so the Enthusiast is generally talking of Religion, of God, or of the things of God: but talking in such a manner that every reasonable Christian may discern the disorder of his mind. Enthusiasm, in general, may, then, be described in some such manner as this: A religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God: at least, from imputing something to God, which ought not to be imputed to him,

or expecting something from God, which ought not to be expected from him.

13. There are innumerable sorts of Enthusiasm. Those which are most common, and for that reason most dangerous, I shall endeavour to reduce under a few general heads, that they may more easily be understood and avoided.

The first sort of Enthusiasm which I shall mention, is that of those who imagine they have the *grace* which they have not. Thus some imagine, when it is not so, that they have *redemption* through Christ, "even the forgiveness of sins." These are usually such as "have no root in themselves:" no deep repentance, or thorough conviction. "Therefore, they receive the word with joy." And "because they have no deepness of earth," no deep work in their heart, therefore, the seed "immediately springs up." There is immediately a superficial change, which, together with that light joy, striking in with the pride of their unbroken heart, and with their inordinate self-love, easily persuades them, they have already "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come."

14. This is properly an instance of the first sort of Enthusiasm: it is a kind of madness, arising from the imagination, that they have that grace which, in truth, they have not: so that they only deceive their own souls. Madness it may justly be termed: for the reasonings of these poor men are right, were their premises good: but as those are a mere creature of their own imagination, so all that is built on them falls to the ground. The foundation of all their reveries is this: They imagine themselves to have faith in Christ. If they have this, they would be "kings and priests to God," possest of "a kingdom which cannot be moved." But they have it not. Consequently, all their following behaviour, is as wide of truth and soberness, as as that of the ordinary madman, who, fancying himself an earthly king, speaks and acts in that character.

15. There are many other Enthusiasts of this sort. Such, for instance, is the fiery zealot for religion; or, more properly, for the opinions and modes of worship, which he

dignifies with that name. This man, also, strongly imagines himself to be a believer in Jesus, yea, that he is a champion for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints. Accordingly, all his conduct is formed upon that vain imagination. And allowing his supposition to be just, he would have some tolerable plea for his behaviour: whereas now it is evidently the effect of a distempered brain, as well as of a distempered heart.

16. But the most common of all the Enthusiasts of this kind, are those who imagine themselves Christians, and are not. These abound, not only in all parts of our land, but in most parts of the habitable earth. That they are not Christians is clear and undeniable, if we believe the Oracles of God. For Christians are holy; these are unholy: Christians love God; these love the world. Christians are humble; these are proud: Christians are gentle; these are passionate. Christians have the mind which was in Christ; these are at the utmost distance from it. Consequently, they are no more Christians, than they are archangels. Yet they imagine themselves so to be; and they can give several reasons for it. For they have been *called so* ever since they can remember: they were *christened* many years ago: they embrace the *Christian Opinions*, vulgarly termed the Christian or Catholic Faith. They use the *Christian modes of worship*, as their fathers did before them. They live, what is called, a good, *Christian life*, as the rest of their neighbours do. And who shall presume to think or say, that these men are not Christians? Though without one grain of true faith in Christ, or of real, inward holiness! without ever having tasted the love of God, or been "made partakers of the Holy Ghost!"

17. Ah poor self-deceivers! Christians ye are not. But you are Enthusiasts in a high degree. Physicians, heal yourselves. But first, know your disease: your whole life is Enthusiasm; as being all suitable to the imagination, that you have received that grace of God which you have not. In consequence of this grand mistake, you blunder on, day by day, speaking and acting under a character, which does

in no wise belong to you. Hence arises that palpable, glaring inconsistency, that runs through your whole behaviour: which is an awkward mixture of real Heathenism and imaginary Christianity. Yet still, as you have so vast a majority on your side, you will always carry it by mere dint of numbers. "That you are the only men in your senses, and all are lunatics who are not as you are." But this alters not the nature of things. In the sight of God and his holy angels, yea, and all the children of God upon earth, you are mere madmen, mere Enthusiasts all. Are you not? Are you not "walking in a vain shadow," a shadow of Religion, a shadow of happiness? Are you not still "disquieting yourselves in vain?" With misfortunes as imaginary as your happiness or religion? Do you not fancy yourselves great or good? Very knowing and very wise? How long? Perhaps till death bring you back to your senses; to bewail your folly for ever and ever.

18. A second sort of Enthusiasm, is that of those, who imagine they have such *gifts* from God as they have not. Thus, some have imagined themselves to be endued with a power of working miracles, of healing the sick by a word or a touch, of restoring sight to the blind; yea, even of raising the dead, a notorious instance of which is still fresh in our own History. Others have undertaken to prophesy, to foretel things to come, and that with the utmost certainty and exactness. But a little time usually convinces these Enthusiasts. When plain facts run counter to their predictions, experience performs what reason could not, and sinks them down into their senses.

19. To the same class belong those, who in preaching or prayer, imagine themselves to be so influenced by the Spirit of God, as, in fact, they are not. I am sensible, indeed, that without him we can do nothing; more especially in our public ministry: that all our preaching is utterly vain, unless it be attended with his power: and all our prayer, unless his Spirit therein help our infirmities. I know, if we do not both preach and pray by the Spirit, it is all but lost labour: seeing the help that is done upon earth,

he doth it himself, who worketh all in all. But this does not affect the case before us. Though there is a real influence of the Spirit of God, there is also an imaginary one; and many there are who mistake the one for the other. Many suppose themselves to be under that influence, when they are not, when it is far from them. And many others suppose they are more under that influence than they really are. Of this number, I fear, are all they who imagine, that God dictates the very words they speak: and that, consequently, it is impossible they should speak any thing amiss, either as to the matter or manner of it. It is well known, how many Enthusiasts, of this sort also, have appeared during the present century: some of whom speak in a far more authoritative manner, than either St. Paul or any of the Apostles.

20. The same sort of Enthusiasm, though in a lower degree, is frequently found in men of a private character. They may likewise imagine themselves to be influenced or directed by the Spirit, when they are not. I allow, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" and that if ever we either think, speak, or act aright, it is through the assistance of that blessed Spirit. But how many impute things to him, or expect things from him, without any rational or scriptural ground? Such are they who imagine, they either do or shall receive *particular directions* from God, not merely in things of importance, but in things of no moment, in the most trifling circumstances of life. Whereas in these cases God has given us our own reason for a guide: though never excluding the secret assistance of his Spirit.

21. To this kind of Enthusiasm they are peculiarly exposed, who expect to be directed of God, either in spiritual things or in common life, in what is justly called, an *extraordinary* manner. I mean, by visions or dreams, by strong impressions, or impulses on the mind. I do not deny, that God has, of old times, manifested his will in this manner. Or, that he can do so now. Nay, I believe he does, in

some very rare instances. But how frequently do men mistake therein! How are they misled by pride and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions, to God, as are utterly unworthy of him! Now this is all pure Enthusiasm, all as wide of Religion, as it is of Truth and Soberness.

22. Perhaps some may ask, "Ought we not then to enquire, What is the will of God in all things? And ought not his will to be the rule of our practice?" Unquestionably it ought. But how is a sober Christian to make this enquiry? To know, what is the will of God? Not by waiting for supernatural dreams. Not by expecting God to reveal it in visions. Not by looking for any *particular impressions*, or sudden impulses on his mind. No: but by consulting the Oracles of God. "To the law and to the testimony." This is the general method of knowing what is "the holy and acceptable will of God."

23. "But how shall I know what is the will of God, in such and such a particular case? The thing proposed is, in itself, of an indifferent nature, and so left undetermined in Scripture." I answer, the Scripture itself gives you a general rule, applicable to all particular cases. "The will of God is our sanctification." It is his will that we should be inwardly and outwardly holy: that we should be good and do good in every kind, and in the highest degree whereof we are capable. Thus far we tread upon firm ground. This is as clear as the shining of the sun. In order, therefore, to know, what is the will of God in a particular case, we have only to apply this general rule.

24. Suppose, for instance, it were proposed to a reasonable man, to marry, or to enter into a new business; in order to know, whether this be the will of God, being assured, "It is the will of God concerning me, that I should be as holy and do as much good as I can," he has only to enquire, "In which of these states can I be most holy, and do the most good?" And this is to be determined, partly by reason, and partly by experience. Experience tells him

what advantages he has in his present state, either for being or doing good: and Reason is to shew, what he certainly or probably will have in the state proposed. By comparing these, he is to judge, which of the two may most conduce to his being and doing good: and as far as he knows this, so far is he certain, what is the Will of God.

25. Mean time, the assistance of his Spirit is supposed, during the whole process of the enquiry. Indeed it is not easy to say, in how many ways that assistance is conveyed. He may bring many circumstances to our remembrance, may place others in a stronger and clearer light; may insensibly open our mind to receive conviction, and fix that conviction upon our heart. And to a concurrence of many circumstances of this kind, in favour of what is acceptable in his sight, he may superadd such an unutterable peace of mind, and so uncommon a measure of his love, as will leave us no possibility of doubting, that this, even this, is his Will concerning us.

26. This is the plain, scriptural, rational way to know what is the will of God in a particular case. But considering how seldom this way is taken, and what a flood of Enthusiasm must needs break in, on those who endeavour to know the will of God, by unscriptural, irrational ways: it were to be wished, that the expression itself was far more sparingly used. The using it, as some do, on the most trivial occasions, is a plain breach of the third commandment. It is a gross way of taking the Name of God in vain, and betrays great irreverence toward him. Would it not be far better, then, to use other expressions, which are not liable to such objections? For example: Instead of saying, on any particular occasion, "I want to know what is the Will of God," would it not be better to say, "I want to know, what will be most for my improvement; and what will make me most useful." This way of speaking is clear and unexceptionable. It is putting the matter on a plain, scriptural issue, and that without any danger of Enthusiasm.

27. A third very common sort of Enthusiasm, (if it does not coincide with the former) is that of those who think to attain the End without using the Means, by the immediate power of God. If indeed those means were providentially withheld, they would not fall under this charge. God can, and sometimes does, in cases of this nature, exert his own immediate power. But they who expect this when they have those means, and will not use them, are proper Enthusiasts. Such are they who expect to understand the Holy Scriptures, without reading them, and meditating thereon: yea, without using all such helps as are in their power, and may probably conduce to that end. Such are they who designedly speak in the public assembly, without any premeditation. I say designedly: because there may be such circumstances, as, at some times, make it unavoidable. But whoever despises that great mean of speaking profitably, is so far an Enthusiast.

28. It may be expected that I should mention what some have accounted, a fourth sort of Enthusiasm, namely, The imagining those things to be owing to the Providence of God, which are not owing thereto. But I doubt. I know not what things they are, which are not owing to the Providence of God: in ordering, or, at least, in governing of which, this is not either directly or remotely concerned. I except nothing but sin: and even in the sins of others, I see the Providence of God to me. I do not say, his *general* Providence; for this I take to be a sounding word, which means just nothing. And if there be a *particular* Providence, it must extend to all persons and all things. So our Lord understood it, or he could never have said, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered." And, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of your Father which is in heaven." But if it be so, if God preside *universis tanquam singulis, et singulis tanquam universis;* over the whole universe as over every single person, and over every single person as over the whole universe: what is it (except only our own sins) which we are not to ascribe

to the Providence of God? So that I cannot apprehend, there is any room here, for the charge of Enthusiasm.

29. If it be said, The charge lies here: "When you impute *this* to Providence, you imagine yourself the peculiar favourite of heaven." I answer, you have forgot some of the last words I spoke, *præsidet universis tanquam singulis.* His Providence is over all men in the universe, as much as over any single person. Do not you see, that he, who believing this, imputes any thing which befals him to Providence, does not therein make himself any more the favourite of heaven, than he supposes every man under heaven to be? Therefore, you have no pretence, upon this ground, to charge him with Enthusiasm.

30. Against every sort of this, it behoves us to guard, with the utmost diligence: considering the dreadful effects it has so often produced, and which indeed naturally result from it. Its immediate offspring is pride, it continually increases this source from whence it flows, and hereby it alienates us more and more, from the favour and from the life of God. It dries up the very springs of faith and love; of righteousness and true holiness. Seeing all these flow from grace. But "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble."

31. Together with pride there will naturally arise an unadvisable and unconvincible spirit. So that into whatever error or fault the Enthusiast falls, there is small hope of his recovery. For Reason will have little weight with him (as has been frequently and justly observed) who imagines he is led by a higher Guide, by the immediate Wisdom of God. And as he grows in pride, so he must grow in unadvisableness and in stubbornness also. He must be less and less capable of being convinced, less susceptible of persuasion; more and more attached to his own judgment and his own will, till he be altogether fixt and immovable.

32. Being thus fortified both against the grace of God, and against all advice and help from man, he is wholly left to the guidance of his own heart, and of the king of the

children of pride. No marvel then, that he is daily more rooted and grounded in contempt of all mankind, in furious anger, in every unkind disposition, in every earthly and devilish temper. Neither can we wonder at the terrible outward effects, which have flowed from such dispositions in all ages: even all manner of wickedness, all the works of darkness, committed by those who call themselves Christians, while they wrought with greediness such things, as were hardly named even among the Heathens.

Such is the nature, such the dreadful effects, of that many-headed monster, Enthusiasm! From the consideration of which, we may now draw some plain inferences, with regard to our own practice.

33. And, first, If Enthusiasm be a term, though so frequently used, yet so rarely understood, take you care, not to talk of you know not what; not to use the word, till you understand it. As in all other points, so likewise in this, learn to think before you speak. First, know the meaning of this hard word; and then use it, if need require.

34. But if so few, even among men of education and learning, much more among the common sort of men, understand this dark, ambiguous word, or have any fixt notion of what it means: then, secondly, Beware of judging or calling any man an Enthusiast upon common report. This is by no means a sufficient ground, for giving any name of reproach to any man: least of all is it a sufficient ground, for so black a term of reproach as this. The more evil it contains, the more cautious you should be how you apply it to any one: to bring so heavy an accusation without full proof, being neither consistent with justice nor mercy.

35. But if Enthusiasm be so great an evil, beware you are not entangled therewith yourself. Watch and pray, that ye fall not into the temptation. It easily besets those who fear or love God. O beware you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Do not imagine you have attained the grace of God, to which you have

not attained. You may have much joy; you may have a measure of love, and yet not have a living faith. Cry unto God that he would not suffer you, blind as you are, to go out of the way: that you may never fancy yourself a believer in Christ, till Christ be revealed in you, and till his Spirit witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

36. Beware you are not a fiery, persecuting Enthusiast. Do not imagine that God has called you, (just contrary to the Spirit of him you stile your Master) to destroy men's lives, and not to save them. Never dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourself, and let think. Use no constraint in matters of Religion. Even those who are farthest out of the way, never compel to come in, by any other means, than reason, truth, and love.

37. Beware you do not run with the common herd of Enthusiasts, fancying you are a Christian when you are not. Presume not to assume that venerable name, unless you have a clear, scriptural title thereto: unless you have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he also walked.

38. Beware you do not fall into the second sort of Enthusiasm, fancying you have those gifts from God which you have not. Trust not in visions or dreams; in sudden impressions, or strong impulses of any kind. Remember it is not by these you are to know, what is the will of God on any particular occasion: but by applying the plain Scripture-rule, with the help of Experience and Reason, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God. Do not lightly take the Name of God in your mouth: do not talk of the will of God on every trifling occasion. But let your words as well as your actions, be all tempered with reverence and godly fear.

39. Beware, Lastly, of imagining you shall obtain the end, without using the means conducive to it. God can give the end, without any means at all; but you have no reason to think he will. Therefore, constantly and carefully use all these means, which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace. Use every mean which either

Reason or Scripture recommends, as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining, or increasing any of the gifts of God. Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy Religion, which the world always did, and always will call Enthusiasm: but which, to all who are saved from real Enthusiasm, from merely nominal Christianity, is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God, the glorious image of the Most High: righteousness and peace: a fountain of living water, springing up into everlasting Life!

SERMON XL.

A CAUTION AGAINST BIGOTRY.

MARK IX. 38, 39.

"*And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy Name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not.*"

1. IN the preceding verses we read, that after the Twelve had been disputing, "which of them should be the greatest, Jesus took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of these little children in my Name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, (only) but him that sent me." Then "John answered," (that is, said with reference to what our Lord had spoken, just before,) "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." As if he had said, 'Ought we to have received him? In receiving him, should we have received thee? Ought we not rather to have forbidden him? Did not we do well therein?' "But Jesus said, Forbid him not."

2. The same passage is recited by St. Luke, and almost in the same words. But it may be asked, What is this to us? Seeing no man now *casts out devils*. Has not the

power of doing this been withdrawn from the Church, for twelve or fourteen hundred years? How then are *we* concerned in the case here proposed, or in our Lord's decision of it?

3. Perhaps more nearly than is commonly imagined, the case proposed being no uncommon case. That we may reap our full advantage from it, I design to shew, First, In what sense men may, and do now, *cast out devils:* Secondly, What we may understand by, *He followeth not us.* I shall, Thirdly, explain our Lord's direction, *Forbid him not*, and conclude with an inference from the whole.

I. 1. I am, in the first place to shew, In what sense men may, and do now *cast out devils.*

In order to have the clearest view of this, we should remember, that (according to the scriptural account) as God dwells and works in the children of light, so the devil dwells and works in the children of darkness. As the Holy Spirit possesses the souls of good men, so the evil spirit possesses the souls of the wicked. Hence it is that the Apostle terms him, *The god of this world:* from the uncontrolled power he has over worldly men. Hence our blessed Lord stiles him *the prince of this world:* so absolute is his dominion over it. And hence St. John, *We know that we are of God*, and all who are not of God, *the whole world*, εν τω πονηρω κειται· Not lieth in wickedness; but *lieth in the wicked one;* lives and moves in him, as they who are not of the world, do in God.

2. For the devil is not to be considered only as a "roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour:" nor barely as a subtle enemy, who cometh unawares upon poor souls and "leads them captive at his will:" but as he who dwelleth in them and walketh in them; who *ruleth the darkness* or wickedness of *this world*, of worldly men and all their dark designs and actions, by keeping possession of their hearts, setting up his throne there, and bringing every thought into obedience to himself. Thus the *strong one armed keepeth his house;* and if this *unclean spirit* sometimes *go out of a man*, yet he often returns with *seven spirits*

worse than himself, and they enter in and dwell there. Nor can he be idle in his dwelling. He is continually *working in these children of disobedience.* He works in them with power, with mighty energy, transforming them into his own likeness, effacing all the remains of the image of God, and preparing them for every evil word or work.

3. It is, therefore, an unquestionable truth, that the god and prince of this world, still possesses all who know not God. Only the manner wherein he possesses them now, differs from that wherein he did it of old time. Then he frequently tormented their bodies, as well as souls, and that openly, without any disguise. Now he torments their souls only, (unless in some rare cases) and that as covertly as possible. The reason of this difference is plain. It was then his aim to drive mankind into superstition. Therefore he wrought as openly as he could. But it is his aim to drive us into infidelity. Therefore he works as privately as he can; for the more secret he is, the more he prevails.

4. Yet, if we may credit historians, there are countries even now, where he works as openly as aforetime. "But why in savage and barbarous countries only? Why not in Italy, France, or England" For a very plain reason: he knows his men. And he knows what he hath to do with each. To Laplanders, he appears barefaced: because he is to fix them in superstition and gross idolatry. But with you, he is pursuing a different point. He is to make you idolize yourselves: to make you wiser in your own eyes than God himself, than all the Oracles of God. Now in order to this, he must not appear in his own shape: that would frustrate his design. No: he uses all his art, to make you deny his being, till he has you safe in his own place.

5. He reigns, therefore, although in a different way, yet as absolute in one land as in the other. He has the gay Italian infidel in his teeth, as sure as the wild Tartar. But he is fast asleep in the mouth of the lion, who is too wise to wake him out of sleep. So he only plays with him for the present, and, when he pleases, swallows him up.

The god of this world holds his English worshippers full as fast as those in Lapland. But it is not his business to affright them, lest they should flee to the God of heaven. The prince of darkness, therefore, does not appear, while he rules over these his willing subjects. The conqueror holds his captives so much the safer, because they imagine themselves at liberty. Thus the "strong one armed keepeth his house, and his goods are in peace:" neither the Deist nor nominal Christian suspects he is there; so he and they are perfectly at peace with each other.

6. All this while he works with energy in them. He blinds the eyes of their understanding, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, cannot shine upon them. He chains their souls down to earth and hell, with the chains of their own vile affections. He binds them down to the earth, by love of the world, love of money, of pleasure, of praise. And by pride, envy, anger, hate, revenge, he causes their souls to draw nigh unto hell: acting the more secure and uncontrolled, because they know not that he acts at all.

7. But how easily may we know the cause from its effects! These are sometimes gross and palpable. So they were in the most refined of the heathen nations. Go no farther than the admired, the virtuous Romans. And you will find these, when at the height of their learning and glory, "filled with all unrighteousness; fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity: whisperers, backbiters, despiteful, proud boasters, disobedient to parents; covenant breakers, without natural affection; implacable, unmerciful."

8. The strongest parts of this description are confirmed by one, whom some may think a more unexceptionable witness. I mean, their brother heathen, Dion Cassius: who observes, that before Cæsar's return from Gaul, not only gluttony and lewdness of every kind, were open and barefaced; not only falsehood, injustice, and unmercifulness abounded, in public courts, as well as private families: but the most outrageous robberies, rapine, and murders, were so frequent in all parts of Rome, that few men went out

of doors without making their Wills, as not knowing if they should return alive.

9. As gross and palpable are the works of the devil, among many (if not all) the modern heathens. The natural Religion of the Creeks, Cherikees, Chicasaws, and all other Indians, bordering on our southern Settlements, (not of a few single men, but of entire nations,) is, to torture all their prisoners from morning to night, till at length they roast them to death; and upon the slightest, undesigned provocation, to come behind and shoot any of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them, for the son, if he think his father lives too long, to knock out his brains: and for a mother, if she be tired of her children, to fasten stones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river, one after another.

10. It were to be wished that none but heathens had practised such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed, how little have the Christians come behind them! And not the Spaniards or Portuguese alone, butchering thousands in South-America. Not the Dutch only in the East-Indies, or the French in North-America, following the Spaniards step by step. Our own countrymen too, have wantoned in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby, what spirit it is, that dwells and works in the children of disobedience.

11. These monsters might almost make us overlook the works of the devil, that are wrought in our own country. But, alas! we cannot open our eyes even here, without seeing them on every side. Is it a small proof of his power, that common swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, sodomites, murderers, are still found in every part of our land? How triumphant does the prince of this world reign, in all these children of disobedience!

12. He less openly, but no less effectually works in dissemblers, tale-bearers, liars, slanderers: in oppressors and extortioners; in the perjured, the seller of his friend, his honour, his conscience, his country. And yet these may

talk of religion, or conscience still! of honour, virtue, and public spirit! But they can no more deceive Satan than they can God. He likewise knows those that are his: and a great multitude they are, out of every nation and people, of whom he has full possession at this day.

13. If you consider this, you cannot but see in what sense, men may now also *cast out devils:* yea, and every Minister of Christ does cast them out, if his Lord's work prosper in his hands.

By the Power of God attending his Word, he brings these sinners to repentance: an entire inward as well as outward change, from all evil to all good. And this is, in a sound sense, *to cast out devils*, out of the souls wherein they had hitherto dwelt. The strong one can no longer keep his house. A stronger than he is come upon him, and hath cast him out, taken possession for himself, and made it an habitation of God through his Spirit. Here then the energy of Satan ends, and the Son of God *destroys the works of the devil.* The understanding of the sinner is now enlightened, and his heart sweetly drawn to God. His desires are refined, his affections purified: and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, he grows in grace till he is not only holy in heart, but in all manner of conversation.

15. All this is indeed the Work of God. It is God alone who can cast out Satan. But he is generally pleased to do this by man, as an instrument in his hand; who is then said, "to cast out devils in his name, by his power and authority." And he sends whom he will send upon this great work: but usually such as man would never have thought of. For "his ways are not as our ways, neither his thoughts as our thoughts." Accordingly he chooses the weak to confound the mighty: the foolish to confound the wise: for this plain reason, That he may secure the glory to himself; that "no flesh may glory in his sight."

II. 1. But shall we not *forbid* one who thus "casteth out devils," if "he followeth not us?" This it seems was both the judgment and practice of the great Apostle, till he referred the case to his Master. "We forbade him," saith he,

"because he followeth not us," which he supposed to be a very sufficient reason. What we may understand by this expression, "He followeth not us," is the next point to be considered.

The lowest circumstance we can understand thereby, is, He has no outward connexion with us. We do not labour in conjunction with each other. He is not our fellow-helper in the gospel. And indeed whensoever our Lord is pleased to send many labourers into his harvest, they cannot all act, in subordination to, or in connexion with each other. Nay, they cannot all have personal acquaintance with, nor be so much as known to, one another. Many there will necessarily be in different parts of the harvest, so far from having any mutual intercourse, that they will be as absolute strangers to each other, as if they had lived in different ages. And concerning any of these whom we know not, we may doubtless say, "He followeth not us."

2. A second meaning of this expression may be, He is "not of our party." It has long been matter of melancholy consideration, to all who pray for the peace of *Jerusalem*, that so many several parties are still subsisting among those who are all stiled Christians. This has been particularly observable in our own countrymen, who have been continually dividing from each other, upon points of no moment, and many times such as Religion had no concern in. The most trifling circumstances have given rise to different parties, which have continued for many generations. And each of these would be ready to object to one who was on the other side, "He followeth not us."

3. That expression may mean, Thirdly, He differs from us, in our "Religious Opinions." There was a time, when all Christians were of one mind, as well as of one heart. Such great grace was upon them all, when they were first filled with the Holy Ghost! But how short a space did this blessing continue! How soon was that unanimity lost, and difference of opinion sprang up again, even in the Church of Christ! And that not in nominal, but in real Christians: nay in the very chief of them, the

Apostles themselves? Nor does it appear, That the difference which then began, was ever entirely removed. We do not find, that even those pillars in the temple of God, so long as they remained upon earth, were ever brought to think alike, to be of one mind, particularly with regard to the ceremonial law. It is therefore no way surprising, that infinite varieties of opinion should now be found in the Christian Church. A very probable consequence of this is, That often when we see any "casting out devils," he will be one that, in this sense, "followeth not us:" that is, not of our opinion. It is scarce to be imagined he will be of our mind, in all points, even of Religion. He may very probably think in a different manner from us, even on several subjects of importance: such as, the nature and use of the moral law, the eternal decrees of God, the sufficiency and efficacy of his grace, and the perseverance of his children.

4. He may differ from us, fourthly, not only in opinion, but likewise in some point of practice. He may not approve of that manner of worshipping God, which is practised in our congregation: and may judge that to be more profitable for his soul, which took its rise from Mr. Calvin, or Martin Luther. He may have many objections to that Liturgy, which we approve, beyond all others: many doubts concerning that form of Church-government, which we esteem both Apostolical and Scriptural. Perhaps he may go farther from us yet: he may, from a principle of conscience, refrain from several of those, which we believe to be the ordinances of Christ. Or, if we both agree, That they are ordained of God, there may still remain a difference between us, either as to the manner of administering those ordinances, or the persons to whom they should be administered. Now the unavoidable consequence of any of these differences, will be, that he who thus differs from us, must separate himself, with regard to these points, from our society. In this respect, therefore, "he followeth not us:" he is not (as we phrase it) "of our Church."

5. But in a far stronger sense, "he followeth not us,"

who is not only of a different Church, but of such a Church as we account to be in many respects anti-scriptural and anti-christian: a Church which we believe to be utterly false and erroneous in her doctrines, as well as very dangerously wrong in her practice, guilty of gross superstition as well as of idolatry. A Church that has added many articles to the faith, which was once delivered to the saints; that has dropt one whole commandment of God, and made void several of the rest by her traditions: and that pretending the highest veneration for, and strictest conformity to the ancient Church, has nevertheless brought in numberless innovations, without any warrant either from antiquity or Scripture. Now most certainly "he followeth not us," who stands at so great a distance from us.

6. And yet there may be a still wider difference than this. He who differs from us in judgment or practice, may possibly stand at a greater distance from us, in affection than in judgment. And this indeed is a very natural and a very common effect of the other. The differences which begin in point of opinion, seldom terminate there. They generally spread into the affections, and then separate chief friends. Nor are any animosities so deep and irreconcileable, as those that spring from disagreement in Religion. For this cause the bitterest enemies of a man are those of his own household. For this the father rises against his own children, and the children against the father; and perhaps persecute each other even to the death, thinking all the time they are doing God service. It is therefore nothing more than we expect, if those who differ from us either in religious opinions or practice, soon contract a sharpness, yea bitterness towards us; if they are more and more prejudiced against us, till they conceive as ill an opinion of our persons as of our principles. An almost necessary consequence of this will be, they will speak in the same manner as they think of us. They will set themselves in opposition to us, and, as far as they are able, hinder our work: seeing it does not appear to them to be the work of God, but either of men or of the devil. He that thinks,

speaks, and acts in such a manner as this, in the highest sense, "followeth not us."

7. I do not indeed conceive, that the person of whom the Apostle speaks in the text (although we have no particular account of him, either in the context, or in any other part of Holy Writ) went so far as this. We have no ground to suppose, That there was any material difference between him and the Apostles; much less that he had any prejudice either against them or their Master. It seems we may gather thus much from our Lord's own words, which immediately follow the text, "There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." But I purposely put the case in the strongest light, adding all the circumstances which can well be conceived: that being forewarned of the temptation in its full strength, we may in no case yield to it, and fight against God.

III. 1. Suppose, then, a man have no intercourse with us, suppose he be not of our party, suppose he separate from us, both in judgment, practice, and affection: yet if we see this man "casting out devils, Jesus saith, Forbid him not." This important direction of our Lord, I am, in the third place, to explain.

2. If we see this man casting out devils.—But it would be well, if in such a case, we believed even what we saw with our eyes, if we did not give the lie to our own senses. He must be little acquainted with human nature, who does not immediately perceive, how extremely unready we should be, to believe that any man does cast out devils, who "followeth not us," in all or most of the senses above recited. I had almost said, in any of them: seeing we may easily learn even from what passes in our own breasts, how unwilling men are, to allow any thing good in those, who do not in all things agree with themselves.

3. "But what is a sufficient, reasonable proof that a man does (in the sense above) cast out devils?" The answer is easy. Is there full proof, 1, That a person before us was a gross, open sinner? 2, That he is not so now: that he has

broke off his sins, and lives a Christian life? And, 3, That this change was wrought by his hearing this man preach? If these three points be plain and undeniable, then you have sufficient, reasonable proof, such as you cannot resist without wilful sin, That this man "casts out devils."

4. Then "forbid him not." Beware how you attempt to hinder him, either by your authority, or arguments, or persuasions. Do not in any wise strive to prevent his using all the power which God has given him. If you have *authority* with him, do not use that authority, to stop the work of God. Do not furnish him with *reasons*, why he ought not any more to speak in the Name of Jesus. Satan will not fail to supply him with these, if you do not second him therein. *Persuade* him not to depart from the work. If he should give place to the devil and you, many souls might perish in their iniquity, but their blood would God require at *your* hands.

5. "But what if he be only a *Layman* who casts out devils? Ought I not to forbid him then?"

Is the fact allowed? Is there reasonable proof, That this man has or does "cast out devils?" If there be, forbid him not: no, not at the peril of your soul. Shall not God work by whom he will work? "No man can do these works unless God be with him," unless God have sent him, for this very thing. But if God have sent him, will you call him back? Will you forbid him to go?

6. "But I do not know, That he is sent of God." "Now herein is a marvellous thing," (may any of the seals of his mission say, any whom he hath brought from Satan to God,) that ye know not whence this man is, and behold he hath opened my eyes! If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." If you doubt the fact, send for the parents of the man: send for his brethren, friends, acquaintance. But if you cannot doubt this, if you must needs acknowledge, "That a notable miracle hath been wrought," then with what conscience, with what face can you *charge* him whom God hath sent, "not to speak any more in his Name?"

7. I allow, That it is *highly expedient*, whoever preaches in his Name, should have an outward as well as an inward call. But that it is *absolutely necessary*, I deny.

"Nay, is not the Scripture express? 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron?'" Heb. v. 4.

Numberless times has this text been quoted on the occasion, as containing the very strength of the cause. But surely never was so unhappy a quotation. For, first, Aaron was not called to preach at all. He was called "to offer gifts and sacrifice for sin." That was his peculiar employment. Secondly, These men do not offer sacrifice at all; but only preach, which Aaron did not. Therefore it is not possible to find a text in all the Bible, which is more wide of the point than this.

8. "But what was the practice of the Apostolic age?" You may easily see in the Acts of the Apostles. In the 8th chapter, we read, "There was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles, ver. 1. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word," ver. 4. Now, were all these outwardly called to preach? No man in his senses can think so. Here, then, is an undeniable proof, what was the practice of the apostolic age. Here you see not one, but a multitude of Lay-Preachers, men that were only sent of God.

9. Indeed so far is the practice of the apostolic age, from inclining us to thing it was *unlawful*, for a man to preach before he was ordained, that we have reason to think, it was then accounted *necessary*. Certainly the practice and the direction of the Apostle Paul, was, To *prove* a man before he was ordained at all. "Let these, (the Deacons) says he, first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon," 1 Tim. iii. 10.—Proved? How? By setting them to construe a Sentence of Greek? And asking them a few common-place questions? O amazing proof of a Minister of Christ! Nay: but by making a clear, open trial,

(as is still done by most of the Protestant Churches in Europe;) not only whether their lives be holy and unblamable, but whether they have such gifts as are absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to edify the Church of Christ.

10. But what if a man has these? And has brought sinners to repentance? And yet the Bishop will not ordain him? Then the Bishop does "forbid him to cast out devils." But I dare not forbid him. I have published my reasons to all the world. Yet it is still insisted, I ought to do it. You who insist upon it, answer those reasons. I know not that any have done this yet, or even made an attempt of doing it. Only some have spoken of them as very weak and trifling, and this was prudent enough. For it is far easier to despise, at least, seem to despise an argument than to answer it. Yet till this be done I must say, when I have reasonable proof that any man does cast out devils, whatever others do, I dare not forbid him, lest I be found even to fight against God.

11. And whosoever thou art that fearest God, "forbid him not," either directly or indirectly. There are many ways of doing this. You indirectly forbid him, if you either wholly deny, or despise and make little account of the work which God has wrought by his hands. You indirectly forbid him, when you discourage him in his work, by drawing him into disputes concerning it, by raising objections against it, or frighting him with consequences, which very possibly will never be. You forbid him, when you shew any unkindness toward him, either in language or behaviour: and much more when you speak of him to others, either in an unkind or a contemptuous manner: when you endeavour to represent him to any, either in an odious or a despicable light. You are forbidding him all the time you are speaking evil of him, or making no account of his labours. O forbid him not in any of these ways: nor by forbidding others to hear him, by discouraging sinners from hearing that word, which is able to save their souls.

12. Yea, if you would observe our Lord's direction in

its full meaning and extent, then remember his word, "He that is not for us is against us; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth:" He that gathereth not men into the kingdom of God, assuredly scatters them from it. For there can be no neuter in this war. Every one is either on God's side or Satan's. Are you on God's side? Then you will not only not forbid any man that "casts out devils," but you will labour, to the uttermost of your power, to forward him in the work. You will readily acknowledge the work of God, and confess the greatness of it. You will remove all difficulties and objections, as far as may be, out of his way. You will strengthen his hands by speaking honourably of him before all men, and avowing the things which you have seen and heard. You will encourage others to attend upon his word, to hear him whom God hath sent. And you will omit no actual proof of tender love, which God gives you an opportunity of shewing him.

IV. 1. If we willingly fail in any of these points, if we either directly or indirectly forbid him, "because he followeth not us," then we are Bigots. This is the inference I draw from what has been said. But the term Bigotry, I fear, as frequently as it is used, is almost as little understood as Enthusiasm. It is, too strong an attachment to, or fondness for, our own party, opinion, Church, and Religion. Therefore, he is a Bigot, who is so fond of any of these, so strongly attached to them, as to forbid any who casts out devils, because he differs from himself, in any or all these particulars.

2. Do *you* beware of this. Take care, 1, That you do not convict yourself of Bigotry, by your unreadiness to believe, that any man does cast out devils, who differs from you. And if you are clear thus far, if you acknowledge the fact, then examine yourself, 2. Am I not convicted of Bigotry in this, in forbidding him directly or indirectly? Do I not directly forbid him on this ground, because he is not of my *Party*? Because he does not fall in with my

Opinions? Or because he does not worship God according to that scheme of Religion, which I have received from my fathers?

3. Examine yourself, Do I not indirectly at least forbid him, on any of these grounds? Am I not sorry, that God should thus own and bless a man that holds such erroneous opinions? Do I not discourage him, because he is not of my Church? By disputing with him concerning it, by raising objections, and by perplexing his mind with distant consequences? Do I shew no anger, contempt, or unkindness of any sort, either in my words or actions? Do I not mention behind his back, his (real or supposed) faults? His defects or infirmities? Do not I hinder sinners from hearing his word? If you do any of these things, you are a Bigot to this day.

4. "Search me, O Lord, and prove me. Try out my reins and my heart! Look well if there be any way of *Bigotry* in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In order to examine ourselves thoroughly, let the case be proposed in the strongest manner. What if I were to see a Papist, an Arian, a Socinian, casting out devils? If I did, I could not forbid even him, without convicting myself of Bigotry. Yea, If it could be supposed that I should see a Jew, a Deist, or a Turk, doing the same, were I to forbid him either directly or indirectly, I should be no better than a Bigot still.

5. O stand clear of this. But be not content with not forbidding any that cast out devils. It is well, to go thus far, but do not stop here. If you will avoid all Bigotry, go on. In every instance of this kind, whatever the instrument be, acknowledge the finger of God. And not only acknowledge, but rejoice in his work, and praise his Name with thanksgiving. Encourage whomsoever God is pleased to employ, to give himself wholly up thereto. Speak well of him wheresoever you are: defend his character and his mission. Enlarge, as far as you can, his sphere of action. Shew him all kindness in word and deed. And cease not to

cry to God in his behalf, that he may save both himself and them that hear him.

6. I need add but one caution. Think not, the Bigotry of another, is any excuse for your own. It is not impossible, that one who casts out devils himself may yet forbid you so to do. You may observe, this is the very case mentioned in the text. The Apostles forbade another to do what they did themselves. But beware of retorting. It is not your part, to return evil for evil. Another's not observing the direction of our Lord, is no reason why you should neglect it. Nay, but let him have all the Bigotry to himself. If he forbid *you*, do not you forbid *him*. Rather labour, and watch, and pray the more, to confirm your love toward him. If he speak all manner of evil of *you*, speak all manner of good (that is true) of *him*. Imitate herein that glorious saying of a great man, (O that he had always breathed the same spirit!) "Let Luther call me an hundred devils: I will still reverence him as a messenger of God."

SERMON XLI.

CATHOLIC SPIRIT.

2 Kings x. 15.

"*And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. And he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thy hand.*"

1. IT is allowed even by those who do not pay this great debt, that Love is due to all mankind: the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," carrying its own evidence to all that hear it. And that, not according to the miserable construction put upon it by the zealots of old times, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," thy relation, acquaintance, friend, "and hate thine enemy:" not so. "I say unto you," saith our Lord, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children," (may appear so to all mankind,) "of your Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

2. But it is sure, there is a peculiar love which we owe to those that love God. So David, "All my delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel

in virtue." And so a greater than he, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," John xiii. 34, 35. This is that love on which the Apostle John so frequently and strongly insists; "This, saith he, is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another," 1 John iii. 11. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. And we ought," (if love should call us thereto,) "to lay down our lives for the Brethren," ver. 16. And again, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love," chap. iv. 7, 8. "Not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," ver. 10, 11.

3. All men approve of this. But do all men practise it? Daily experience shews the contrary. Where are even the Christians who "love one another, as He hath given us commandment?" How many hindrances lie in the way! The two grand, general hindrances are, first, That they cannot all think alike: and, in consequence of this, secondly, They cannot all walk alike: but in several smaller points their practice must differ, in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

4. But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship, may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another, in love and good works.

5. Surely in this respect, the example of Jehu himself, as mixed a character as he was of, is well worthy both the attention and imitation of every serious Christian. "And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the

son of Rechab coming to meet him. And he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, Give me thine hand."

The text naturally divides itself into two parts, first, A question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Secondly, An offer made on Jehonadab's answering, It is. "If it be, give me thine hand."

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

The very first thing we may observe in these words, is that here is no enquiry concerning Jehonadab's opinions. And yet it is certain, he held some which were very uncommon, indeed quite peculiar to himself: and some which had a close influence upon his practice: on which likewise he laid so great a stress, as to entail them upon his children's children, to their latest posterity. This is evident from the account given by Jeremiah, many years after his death: "I took Jaazaniah and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites—And set before them pots full of wine and cups, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, we will drink no wine; for Jonadab (or Jehonadab) the son of Rechab our father," (it would be less ambiguous if the words were placed thus, Jehonadab *our father, the son of* Rechab: out of love and reverence to whom he probably desired his descendants might be called by that name) "commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents—And we have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us," Jer. xxxv. 3—10.

2. And yet Jehu (although it seems to have been his manner, both in things secular and religious, to *drive furiously*) does not concern himself at all with any of these things, but lets Jehonadab abound in his own sense. And

neither of them appears to have given the other the least disturbance, touching the opinions which he maintained.

3. It is very possible, that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions: and some of them may be as singular herein, as even Jehonadab was. And it is certain, so long as *we know* but *in part*, that all men will not see all things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of the human understanding, that several men will be of several minds, in Religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be "till the restitution of all things."

4. Nay farther: although every man necessarily believes, that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for, to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as, not to hold it:) yet can no man be assured, That all his own opinions taken together, are true. Nay, every thinking man is assured they are not: seeing *Humanum est errare et nescire.* To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity. This, therefore, he is sensible is his own case. He knows in the general, that he himself is mistaken. Although in what particulars he mistakes, he does not, perhaps he cannot know.

5. I say, perhaps he cannot know. For who can tell how far invincible ignorance may extend? Or (which comes to the same thing) invincible prejudice: which is so often fixed in tender minds, that it is afterwards impossible to tear up what has taken so deep a root. And who can say, unless he knew every circumstance attending it, how far any mistake is culpable? Seeing all guilt must suppose some concurrence of the will: of which He can only judge who searcheth the heart.

6. Every wise man, therefore, will allow others the same liberty of thinking, which he desires they should allow him: and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks

him, with whom he desires to unite in love, that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

7. We may, secondly, observe, That here is no enquiry made concerning Jehonadab's mode of worship: although it is highly probable, there was in this respect also, a very wide difference between them. For we may well believe Jehonadab as well as his posterity, worshipped God at Jerusalem: whereas Jehu did not; he had more regard to state-policy than Religion. And, therefore, although he slew the worshippers of Baal, *and destroyed* Baal, *out of* Israel: yet *from the* convenient *sin of* Jeroboam, the worship of *the golden calves, he departed not*, 2 Kings x. 29.

8. But even among men of an upright heart, men who desire to "have a conscience void of offence," it must needs be, that as long as there are various opinions, there will be various ways of worshipping God: seeing a variety of opinions necessarily implies a variety of practice. And as in all ages, men have differed in nothing more than in their opinions concerning the Supreme Being, so in nothing have they more differed from each other, than in the manner of worshipping him. Had this been only in the heathen world, it would not have been at all surprising. For we know, these "by their wisdom knew not God:" nor, therefore, could they know how to worship him. But is it not strange, that even in the Christian world, although they all agree in the general, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" yet the particular modes of worshipping God, are almost as various as among the heathens?

9. And how shall we choose among so much variety? No man can choose for, or prescribe to another. But every one must follow the dictates of his own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind, and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men, thus to lord it over the consciences of

his brethren. But every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.

10. Although, therefore, every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the christian institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed: (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God; for "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed;") yet none can be obliged by any power upon earth, but that of his own conscience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. I know it is commonly supposed, that the place of our birth, fixes the Church to which we ought to belong: that one, for instance, who is born in England ought to be a member of that which is stiled, *the Church of England*, and consequently to worship God in the particular manner, which is prescribed by that Church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this; but I find many reasons to abate of this zeal. I fear, it is attended with such difficulties, that no reasonable man can get over. Not the least of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no reformation from Popery: seeing it entirely destroys the right of private judgment, on which that whole Reformation stands.

11. I dare not, therefore, presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical. But my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, "Are you of my Church? Of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of Church-government, and allow the same Church-Officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer, wherein I worship God?" I enquire not, "Do you receive the Supper of the Lord, in the same posture and manner that I do?" Nor, whether in the administration of baptism, you agree with me, in admitting sureties for the baptised? In the manner of administering it? Or the age of those to whom it should be administered? Nay, I ask not of you, (as clear as I am in my own mind,) Whether you allow baptism and the Lord's-

supper at all? Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season. My only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

12. But what is properly implied in the question? I do not mean, what did Jehu imply therein? But what should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren?

The first thing implied is this: Is thy heart right with God? Dost thou believe his Being, and his Perfections? His Eternity, Immensity, Wisdom, Power: his Justice, Mercy, and Truth? Dost thou believe, that he now "upholdeth all things by the word of his power?" And that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory, and the good of them that love him? Hast thou a divine evidence, or supernatural conviction, of the things of God? Dost thou "walk by faith, not by sight?" "Looking not at temporal things, but things eternal?"

13. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "God over all, blessed for ever?" Is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou "know Jesus Christ and him crucified?" Does he "dwell in thee, and thou in him?" Is he "formed in thy heart by faith?" Having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou "submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus?" Art thou "found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith?" And art thou, through him, "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life?"

14. Is thy faith ενεργουμενη δι αγαπης: "filled with the energy of love?" Dost thou love God? I do not say, "above all things;" for it is both an unscriptural and an ambiguous expression: but "with all thy heart, and with all thy strength?" Dost thou seek all thy happiness in him alone? And dost thou find what thou seekest? Does thy soul continually "magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour?" Having learned "in every thing to give

thanks," dost thou find, "it is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful?" Is God the centre of thy soul? The sum of all thy desires? Art thou accordingly *laying up* thy *treasure in heaven*, and "counting all things else dung and dross?" Hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul? Then thou art *crucified to the world.* Thou *art dead* to all *below, and thy life is hid with Christ in God.*

15. Art thou employed in doing "not thy own will, but the Will of him that sent thee?" Of him that sent thee down to sojourn here awhile, to spend a few days in a strange land, till, having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy Father's house? Is it thy meat and drink "to do the Will of thy Father which is in heaven?" Is *thine eye single* in all things? Always fixed on him? Always *looking unto Jesus?* Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou dost? In all thy labour, thy business, thy conversation? Aiming only at the glory of God in all? "Whatsoever thou dost, either in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through him?"

16. Does the love of God constrain thee to "serve him with fear?" To "rejoice unto him with reverence?" Art thou more afraid of displeasing God, than either of death or hell? Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of offending the eyes of his glory? Upon this ground, dost thou "hate all evil ways;" every transgression of his holy and perfect law? And herein "exercise thyself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man?"

17. Is thy heart right toward thy neighbour? Dost thou "love as thyself," all mankind without exception? "If you love those only that love you, what thank have ye?" Do you "love your enemies?" Is your soul full of goodwill, of tender affection toward them? Do you love even the enemies of God? The unthankful and unholy? Do your bowels yearn over them? Could you *wish yourself* (temporally) *accursed* for their sake? And do you shew this,

by "blessing them that curse you, and praying for those that despitefully use you and persecute you?"

18. Do you shew your love by your works? While you have time, as you have opportunity, do you in fact "do good to all men," neighbours or strangers, friends or enemies, good or bad? Do you do them all the good you can? Endeavouring to supply all their wants, assisting them both in body and soul, to the uttermost of your power? If thou art thus minded, may every Christian say, yea, if thou art but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart."

II. 1. "If it be, give me thy hand." I do not mean, "Be of my opinion." You need not. I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, "I will be of your opinion." I cannot. It does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear as I will. Keep you your opinion: I mine: and that as steadily as ever. You need not endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other. Only "give me thine hand."

2. I do not mean, "Embrace my modes of worship: or, I will embrace yours." This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act, as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of Church-government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized, and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, That forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. If you judge extemporary prayer to be of more use, act suitable to your own judgment. My sentiment is, That I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized: and, that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master. However, if you are

not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment, upon any of the preceding heads. Let all these smaller points stand aside. Let them never come into sight. "If thine heart be as my heart," if thou love God and all mankind, I ask no more: "Give me thine hand."

3. I mean, First, love me. And that not only as thou lovest all mankind; not only as thou lovest thine enemies, or the enemies of God, those that hate thee, that "despitefully use thee and persecute thee:" not only as a stranger, as one of whom thou knowest neither good nor evil. I am not satisfied with this. No; "If thine heart be right, as mine with thy heart," then love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother: as a brother in Christ, a fellow-citizen of the New Jerusalem, a fellow-soldier engaged in the same warfare, under the same Captain of our salvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and a joint heir of his glory.

4. Love me (but in a higher degree, than thou dost the bulk of mankind) with the love that is *long-suffering and kind;* that is patient, if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increasing my burthen, and is tender, soft, and compassionate still: that *envieth not*, if at any time it please God, to prosper me in this work even more than thee. Love me with the love that *is not provoked* either at my follies or infirmities; or even at my acting (if it should sometimes so appear to thee) not according to the will of God. Love me so as to *think no evil* of me, to put away all jealousy and evil surmising. Love me with the love that *covereth all things;* that never reveals either my faults or infirmities: that *believeth all things*, is always willing to think the best, to put the fairest construction on all my words and actions: that *hopeth all things;* either that the thing related was never done; or not done with such circumstances as are related: or at least, that it was done with a good intention: or in a sudden stress of temptation. And hope to the end, that whatever is amiss, will, by the grace of God, be corrected, and, whatever is wanting, supplied, through the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus.

5. I mean, Secondly, Commend me to God in all thy prayers, wrestle with him in my behalf, that he would speedily correct what he sees amiss, and supply what is wanting in me. In thy nearest access to the Throne of Grace, beg of him, who is then very present with thee, That my heart may be more as thy heart, more right both toward God and toward man: That I may have a fuller conviction of things not seen, and a stronger view of the love of God in Christ Jesus: may more steadily walk by faith, not by sight; and more earnestly grasp eternal life. Pray, that the love of God and of all mankind, may be more largely poured into my heart; that I may be more fervent and active in doing the will of my Father which is in heaven; more zealous of good works, and more careful to abstain from all appearance of evil.

6. I mean, Thirdly, Provoke me to love and to good works. Second thy prayer as thou hast opportunity, by speaking to me in love, whatsoever thou believest to be for my soul's health. Quicken me in the work which God has given me to do, and instruct me how to do it more perfectly. Yea, "smite me friendly, and reprove me," wherein soever I appear to thee to be doing rather my own will, than the will of him that sent me. O speak and spare not, whatever thou believest may conduce, either to the amending my faults, the strengthening my weakness, the building me up in love, or the making me more fit, in any kind, for the Master's use.

7. I mean, Lastly, Love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conscience thou canst, (retaining still thy own opinions, and thy own manner of worshipping God,) join with me in the work of God, and let us go on hand in hand. And thus far, it is certain, thou mayest go. Speak honourably wherever thou art, of the work of God, by whomsoever he works, and kindly of his messengers. And if it be in thy power, not only sympathize with them when they are in any difficulty or distress, but give them a cheerful and effectual assistance, that they may glorify God on thy behalf.

8. Two things should be observed, with regard to what has been spoken under this last head. The one, that whatsoever love, whatsoever offices of love, whatsoever spiritual or temporal assistance, I claim from him whose heart is right, as my heart is with his: the same I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my measure, to give him. The other, that I have not made this claim, in behalf of myself only, but of all whose heart is right toward God and man, that we may all love one another, as Christ hath loved us.

III. 1. One inference we may make from what has been said. We may learn from hence, What is a Catholic Spirit.

There is scarce any expression which has been more grossly misunderstood, and more dangerously misapplied than this. But it will be easy for any who calmly consider the preceding observations, to correct any such misapprehensions of it, and to prevent any such misapplication.

For, from hence we may learn, First, That a Catholic spirit, Is not *speculative* Latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions. This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being "driven to and fro, and tost about with every wind of doctrine," is a great curse, not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend to true Catholicism. A man of a true Catholic spirit, has not now his Religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun, in his judgment concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine. It is true, he is always ready to hear and weigh, whatsoever can be offered against his principles. But as this does not shew any wavering in his own mind, so neither does it occasion any. He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Observe this, you who know not what spirit ye are of: who call yourselves men of a Catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding: because your mind is all in a mist: because you have no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling all opinions together. Be convinced, that you have quite missed

your way: you know not where you are. You think you are got into the very spirit of Christ: when in truth you are nearer the spirit of antichrist. Go, first, and learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ, and then shall you learn to be of a truly Catholic spirit.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, Secondly, That a Catholic spirit is not any kind of *practical* Latitudinarianism. It is not indifference as to public worship, or as to the outward manner of performing it. This, likewise, would not be a blessing but a curse. Far from being a help thereto, it would, so long as it remained, be an unspeakable hindrance to the worshipping of God in spirit and truth. But the man of a truly Catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins. He is clearly convinced, that *this* manner of worshipping of God, is both scriptural and rational. He knows none in the world, which is more scriptural, none which is more rational. Therefore, without rambling hither and thither, he cleaves close thereto, and praises God for the opportunity of so doing.

3. Hence we may, Thirdly, learn, That a Catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations. This is another sort of Latitudinarianism no less absurd and unscriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly Catholic spirit. He is fixed in his congregation as well as in his principles. He is united to one, not only in spirit, but by all the outward ties of Christian fellowship. There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the Supper of the Lord. There he pours out his soul in public prayer, and joins in public praise and thanksgiving. There he rejoices to hear the word of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God. With these his nearest, his best beloved brethren, on solemn occasions, he seeks God by fasting. These particularly he watches over in love, as they do over his soul, admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproving, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household, and there-

fore, according to the ability God has given him, naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness.

4. But while he is steadily fixed in his religious principles, in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus: while he firmly adheres to that worship of God, which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight, and while he is united by the tenderest and closest ties, to one particular congregation, his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not: he embraces with strong and cordial affection, neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is catholic, or universal love. And he that has this, is of a Catholic spirit. For love alone gives the title to this character. Catholic love is a Catholic spirit.

5. But if we take this word in the strictest sense, a man of a Catholic spirit, is one who, in the manner above-mentioned, *gives his hand*, to all whose *hearts are right with his heart*. One who knows how to value, and praise God, for all the advantages he enjoys; with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping him; and above all, his union with a congregation, fearing God and working righteousness. One who, retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom, all of whatever opinion, or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly Catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart, who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men: who speaks comfortably to them, and labours by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his

power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready "to spend and be spent for them;" yea, "to lay down his life for" their sake.

6. Thou, O Man of God! think on these things. If thou be already in this way, go on. If thou have heretofore mistook the path, bless God who hath brought thee back. And now run the race which is set before thee, in the royal way of universal love. Take heed, lest thou be either wavering in thy judgment or straitened in thy bowels. But keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the saints, and grounded in love, in true Catholic love, till thou art swallowed up in love for ever and ever.

SERMON XLII.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

PHILIPPIANS III. 12.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

1. THERE is scarcely any expression in Holy Writ, which has given more offence than this. The word *perfect* is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them. And whosoever preaches *Perfection*, (as the phrase is) i. e. asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them, worse than a heathen man or a publican.

2. And, hence, some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions; *because they have given so great offence.* But are they not found in the Oracles of God? If so, by what authority, can any Messenger of God lay them aside, even tho' all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ; neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath spoken, that will we speak, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear: knowing that, then alone can any Minister of Christ be, "pure from the blood of all men," when he hath "not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God."

3. We may not, therefore, lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God, and not of man. But we may, and ought to explain the meaning of them; that those who are sincere of heart, may not err to the right hand or

left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling. And this is the more needful to be done, because in the verse, already repeated, the Apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: "Not," saith he, "as though I were already perfect." And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea and many others, as perfect. "Let us," saith he, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

4. In order, therefore, to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, In what sense Christians are *not*: and,
Secondly, In what sense they are *perfect*.

I. 1. In the first place, I shall endeavour to shew, In what sense Christians are *not perfect*. And both from Experience and Scripture it appears, first, that they are not perfect in Knowledge: they are not *so* perfect in this life, as to be free from Ignorance. They know, it may be in common with other men, many things relating to the present world: and they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God hath revealed. They know, likewise, (what the natural man receiveth not; for these things are spiritually discerned) "what manner of love it is, wherewith the Father hath loved them, that they should be called the sons of God;" they know the mighty working of his Spirit in their hearts, and the wisdom of his Providence, directing all their paths, and causing all things to work together for their good. Yea, they know in every circumstance of life, what the Lord requireth of them, and how to keep a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man.

2. But innumerable are the things which they know not. "Touching the Almighty himself, they cannot search him out to perfection. Lo, these are but a part of his ways; but the thunder of his Power, who can understand?" They cannot understand, I will not say, how "there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit, and these Three are One;" or how the eternal Son of God "took upon himself the form of a servant:" but not any one attribute, not any one circumstance of the Divine Nature. Neither is it for them to know the times and seasons, when God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even those which he hath in part revealed, by his servants and prophets, since the world began. Much less do they know, when God, having "accomplished the number of his elect, will hasten his kingdom:" when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

3. They know not the reasons even of many of his present dispensations with the sons of men: but are constrained to rest here, tho' "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat." Yea, often with regard to his dealings with themselves, doth their Lord say unto them, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And how little do they know, of what is ever before them, of even the visible works of his hands? How "he spreadeth the North over the empty place, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing?" How he unites all the parts of this vast machine by a secret chain, which cannot be broken? So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge of even the best of men!

4. No one, then, is so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, Secondly, from Mistake, which indeed is almost an unavoidable consequence of it; seeing those who *know but in part*, are ever liable to err, touching the things which they know not. It is true the children of God do not mistake, as to the things essential to salvation. They do not "put darkness for light, or light for darkness, neither seek death in the error of their life." For they are *taught of God*, and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness, is so plain, that "the wayfaring man, tho' a fool, need not err therein." But in things unessential to salvation, they do err, and that frequently. The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken, even with regard to facts; believing those things not to have been, which really were,

or those to have been done, which were not. Or, suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be, with regard to its circumstances; believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different, from what, in truth, they were. And hence cannot but arise many farther mistakes. Hence they may believe either past or present actions, which were, or are evil, to be good; and such as were, or are good, to be evil. Hence also they may judge, not according to truth, with regard to the characters of men: and that, not only by supposing good men to be better, or wicked men to be worse than they are; but by believing them to have been, or to be good men, who were, or are very wicked: or perhaps, those to have been, or to be wicked men, who were, or are holy and unreprovable.

5. Nay, with regard to the Holy Scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mistake day by day: especially with respect to those parts thereof, which less immediately relate to practice. Hence, even the children of God are not agreed as to the interpretation of many places in Holy Writ: nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not the children of God on either side. But it is a proof, that we are no more to expect any living man to be *infallible*, than to be *omniscient*.

6. If it be objected to what has been observed under this and the preceding head, that St. John, speaking to his brethren in the faith, says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things," 1 John ii. 20. The answer is plain, "Ye know all things that are needful for your soul's health." That the Apostle never designed to extend this farther, that he could not speak it in an absolute sense, is clear, first, from hence, that otherwise he would describe the disciple as *above his Master;* seeing Christ himself, as man, knew not all things:—"Of that hour," saith he, "knoweth no man, no, not the Son, but the Father only." It is clear, secondly, from the Apostle's own words that follow, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you:" as well as from his frequently

repeated cautions, "Let no man deceive you:" which had been altogether needless, had not those very persons, who had that unction from the Holy One, been liable, not to ignorance only, but to mistake also.

7. Even Christians, therefore, are not *so* perfect, as to be free either from ignorance or error. We may, Thirdly, add, nor from infirmities. Only let us take care to understand this word aright. Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tells us, "Every man has his infirmity, and mine is drunkenness:" another has the infirmity of uncleanness; another of taking God's holy Name in vain. And yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother, *Thou fool*, or returning *railing for railing*. It is plain that, all you who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall, with your infirmities, go quick into hell. But I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed *bodily infirmities*, but all those inward or outward imperfections, which are not of a moral nature. Such are weakness or slowness of understanding, dulness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or retentive memory. Such in another kind are, those which are commonly, in some measure, consequent upon these: namely, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller proportion. And from these none can hope to be perfectly freed, till the spirit return to God that gave it.

8. Nor can we expect till then, to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection belongeth not to this life. It is true, there are those who being given up to work all uncleanness with greediness, scarce perceive the temptations which they resist not, and so seem to be without temptation. There are also many whom the wise enemy of souls seeing to be fast asleep in the dead form of godliness, will not

tempt to gross sin, lest they should awake, before they drop into everlasting burnings. I know, there are also children of God, who being now justified freely, having found redemption in the blood of Christ, for the present feel no temptation. God hath said to their enemies, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm." And for this season, it may be for weeks or months, he causeth them to ride on high places, he beareth them as on eagles' wings, above all the fiery darts of the wicked one. But this state will not last always, as we may learn from that single consideration, that the Son of God himself, in the days of his flesh, was tempted even to the end of his life. Therefore, so let his servant expect to be; for "it is enough that he be as his Master."

9. Christian Perfection, therefore, does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus, every one that is holy, is, in the Scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may, Lastly, observe, that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no *perfection of degrees*, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to *grow in grace*, and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God.

II. 1. In what sense, then, are Christians perfect? This is what I shall endeavour, in the Second place, to shew. But it should be premised, that there are several stages in the christian life as in the natural: some of the children of God being but new-born babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. John, in his first Epistle, (chap. ii. 12. &c.) applies himself severally, to those he terms little children, those he stiles young men, and those whom he entitles fathers. "I write unto you, little children," saith the Apostle, "because your sins are forgiven you:" because thus far you have attained,

being "justified freely," you "have peace with God, thro' Jesus Christ." "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one;" or (as he afterwards addeth) "because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you." Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, the doubts and fears, wherewith he disturbed your first peace; and the witness of God that your sins are forgiven, now *abideth in your heart*. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." Ye have known both the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit of Christ, in your inmost soul. Ye are "perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse. For these only are perfect Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or *born of God*, (an expression taken also in divers senses) as first, Not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do; but this proves nothing either way. To the Law and to the Testimony we appeal. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." By his Word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

3. Now, the Word of God plainly declares, that even those who are only justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, *do not continue in sin;* that they cannot *live any longer therein*, Rom. vi. 1, 2, that they are "planted together in the likeness of the death of Christ," verse 5. That their "old man is crucified with him, the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin: that being dead with Christ, they are freed from sin, ver. 6, 7. That they are "dead unto sin, and alive unto God," ver. 11. That "sin hath no more dominion over them," who are "not under the law but under grace;" but

that these "being freed from sin, are become the servants of righteousness," verses 14, 18.

4. The very least which can be implied in these words, is, that the persons spoken of therein, viz. all real Christians or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in that one, 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2, "He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin,—that he no longer should live to the desires of men, but to the will of God." For this *ceasing from sin*, if it be interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behaviour, must denote the ceasing from the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law.

5. But most express are the well known words of St. John, in his first Epistle, chap. iii. ver. 8, &c. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin. For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And those in the fifth, verse 18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

6. Indeed, it is said, this means only, He sinneth not *wilfully;* or he doth not commit sin *habitually;* or, *not as other men do;* or, *not as he did before.* But by whom is this said? By St. John? No. There is no such word in the text: nor in the whole chapter; nor in all this Epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best answer to deny a bold assertion is, simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the Word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons.

7. And a sort of reason there is, which has been frequently brought to support these strange assertions, drawn from the examples recorded in the Word of God, "What," say they, "did not Abraham himself commit sin, prevari-

cating and denying his wife? Did not Moses commit sin, when he provoked God at the Waters of Strife? Nay, to produce one for all, did not even David, 'the man after God's own heart,' commit sin, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, even murder and adultery?" It is most sure he did. All this is true. But what is it you would infer from hence? It may be granted, first, That David, in the general course of his life, was one of the holiest men among the Jews. And, secondly, That the holiest men among the Jews "did sometimes commit sin." But if you would hence infer, that "all Christians do, and must commit sin, as long as they live;" this consequence we utterly deny. It will never follow from those premises.

8. Those who argue thus, seem never to have considered that declaration of our Lord, Matt. xi. 11, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." I fear, indeed, there are some who have imagined *the kingdom of heaven* here, to mean the kingdom of glory: as if the Son of God had just discovered to us, that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man upon earth! To mention this is sufficiently to refute it. There can, therefore, no doubt be made but *the kingdom of heaven* here, (as in the following verse, where it is said to be *taken by force*) or, *the kingdom of God*, as St. Luke expresses it, is that kingdom of God on earth, whereunto all true believers in Christ, all real Christians belong. In these words, then, our Lord declares two things. First, That before his coming in the flesh, among all the children of men, there had not been one greater than John the Baptist: whence it evidently follows, that neither Abraham, David, nor any Jew, was greater than John. Our Lord, Secondly, declares, that he who is least in the kingdom of God, (in that kingdom which he came to set up on earth, and which *the violent* now began *to take by force*) is greater than he. Not *a greater Prophet*, as some have interpreted the word, for this is palpably false in fact. But greater in

the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians, by those formerly given to the Jews. *Their ministration*, (or dispensation) we allow *was glorious;* but ours *exceeds in glory*. So that whosoever would bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, whosoever gleans up the examples of weakness, recorded in the Law and the Prophets, and thence infers, that they who have *put on Christ*, are endued with no greater strength, doth greatly err, "neither knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

9. "But are there not assertions in Scripture, which prove the same thing, if it cannot be inferred from those examples? Does not the Scripture say expressly, 'Even a just man sinneth seven times a day?'" I answer, No. The Scripture says no such thing. There is no such text in the Bible. That which seems to be intended is the sixteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Proverbs; the words of which are these, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." But this is quite another thing. For, First, the words *a day*, are not in the text. So that if a just man falls seven times in his life, it is as much as is affirmed here. Secondly, here is no mention of *falling into sin* at all; what is here mentioned is, *falling into temporal affliction*. This plainly appears from the verse before, the words of which are these: "Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place." It follows, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." As if he had said, "God will deliver him out of his trouble. But when thou fallest, there shall be none to deliver thee."

10. "But however, in other places," continue the objectors, "Solomon does assert plainly, 'There is no man that sinneth not,' 1 Kings viii. 46. 2 Chron. vi. 36; yea, there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not," Eccles. vii. 20. I answer, Without doubt, thus it was in the days of Solomon. Yea, thus it was from

Adam to Moses, from Moses to Solomon, and from Solomon to Christ. There was then no man that sinned not. Even from the day that sin entered into the world, there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. It is unquestionably true, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant." And that *even so* they (all the holy men of old, who were under the Jewish dispensation) *were*, during that infant-state of the Church, "in bondage under the elements of the world." "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons;" that they might receive that "grace which is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10. Now, therefore, they "are no more servants, but sons." So that whatsoever was the case of those under the law, we may safely affirm with St. John, that since the gospel was given, "He that is born of God, sinneth not."

11. It is of great importance to observe, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference that is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation: and that ground of it which the same Apostle assigns in the seventh chapter of his gospel, ver. 38, &c. After he had there related those words of our blessed Lord, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture had said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," he immediately subjoins, "This spake he of the Spirit, ου εμελλον λαμβανειν οι πιστευοντες εις αυτον, which they who should believe on him, were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Now the Apostle cannot mean here, (as some have taught,) That the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost was not yet given. For this was given; our Lord had given it to all his Apostles, when he first sent them forth to preach the gospel. He then gave them power over unclean spirits to

cast them out; power to heal the sick, yea, to raise the dead. But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then when "he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," that he "received those gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was, that they who "waited for the Promise of the Father," were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

12. That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies; where, speaking of his brethren in the flesh, as now "receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," he adds, (1 Pet. i. 9, 10, &c.) "Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace, (i. e. *the gracious dispensation*,) that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory *(the glorious salvation)* that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister, the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," (viz. at the day of Pentecost, and so unto all generations, into the hearts of all true believers.) On this ground, even "the grace which was brought unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ," the Apostle might well build that strong exhortation, "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind,—as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

13. Those who have duly considered these things must allow, that the privileges of Christians, are in no-wise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation: seeing the fulness of time is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given; the great salvation of God is brought unto men, by the re-

velation of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth; concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old, (so far is David from being the pattern or standard of Christian Perfection,) "He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be as David: and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them," Zech. xii. 8.

14. If, therefore, you would prove that the Apostle's words, "he that is born of God, sinneth not," are not to be understood, according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs: else you will fight as one that beateth the air. And the first of these which is usually brought, is taken from the examples recorded in the New Testament. "The Apostles themselves (it is said) committed sin; nay, the greatest of them, Peter and Paul: St. Paul, by his sharp contention with Barnabas; and St. Peter, by his dissimulation at Antioch." Well, suppose both Peter and Paul did then commit sin; what is it you would infer from hence? That all the other Apostles committed sin sometimes? There is no shadow of proof of this. Or, would you thence infer, That all the other Christians of the Apostolic age committed sin? Worse and worse; this is such an inference as one would imagine a man in his senses could never have thought of. Or, will you argue thus: "If two of the Apostles did once commit sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do, and will commit sin as long as they live?" Alas, my brother! a child of common understanding would be ashamed of such reasoning as this. Least of all can you with any colour of argument infer, "That any man must commit sin at all?" No; God forbid we should thus speak. No necessity of sinning was laid upon them. The grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at this day. With the temptation which fell on them, there was a way to escape; as there is, to every soul of man in every temptation. So that whosoever is tempted to any sin, need not yield; for no man is tempted above that he is able to bear.

15. "But St. Paul besought the Lord thrice, and yet he could not escape from his temptation." Let us consider his own words literally translated. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, an angel, or messenger of Satan to buffet me. Touching this, I besought the Lord thrice, that it [or *he*] might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in weaknesses;—for when I am weak, then am I strong."

16. As this scripture is one of the strong holds of the patrons of sin, it may be proper to weigh it thoroughly. Let it be observed, then, First, It does by no means appear that this thorn, whatsoever it was, occasioned St. Paul to commit sin: much less, laid him under any necessity of doing so. Therefore, from hence it can never be proved that any Christian must commit sin. Secondly, The ancient Fathers inform us, it was bodily pain: a violent headach, saith Tertullian *(de pudic.)* to which both Chrysostom and St. Jerome agree. St. Cyprian* expresses it a little more generally in those terms, "Many and grievous torments of the flesh and of the body."† Thirdly, To this exactly agree the Apostle's own words, "A thorn to the flesh, to smite, beat, or buffet me. My strength is made perfect in weakness:" Which same word occurs no less than four times in these two verses only. But, Fourthly, Whatsoever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. It could no more be inward stirrings, than outward expressions, of pride, anger, or lust. This is manifest beyond all possible exception, from the words that immediately follow: "Most gladly will I glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me." What! did he glory in pride, in anger, in lust? Was it through these *weaknesses*, that the strength of Christ rested upon him? He goes on: "Therefore, I take pleasure in weak-

* De mortalitate. † Carnis et Corporis multa ac gravia tormenta.

nesses; for when I am weak, then am I strong;" i. e. When I am weak *in body*, then am I strong *in spirit*. But will any man dare to say, When I am weak by pride or lust, then am I strong in spirit? I call you all to record this day, who find the strength of Christ resting upon you, Can you glory in anger, or pride, or lust? Can you take pleasure in these infirmities? Do these weaknesses make you strong? Would you not leap into hell, were it possible, to escape them? Even b yourselves, then, judge, whether the Apostle could glory, and take pleasure in them? Let it be, Lastly, observed, That this thorn was given to St. Paul above fourteen years before he wrote this Epistle: which itself was written several years before he finished his course. So that he had, after this, a long course to run, many battles to fight, many victories to gain, and great increase to receive in all the gifts of God, and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore, from any spiritual weakness (if such had been) which he at that time felt, we could by no means infer, that he was never made strong, that Paul the aged, the father in Christ, still laboured under the same weaknesses: that he was in no higher state till the day of his death. From all which it appears, that this instance of St. Paul is quite foreign to the question, and does, in no wise, clash with the assertion of St. John, "He that is born of God, sinneth not."

17. "But does not St. James directly contradict this? His words are, 'In many things we offend all,' ch. iii. ver. 2. And is not offending the same as committing sin?" In this place, I allow it is. I allow the persons here spoken of did commit sin, yea, that they all committed many sins. But who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those many Masters or Teachers, whom God hath not sent, (probably, the same vain men who taught that faith without works, which is so sharply reproved in the preceding chapter.) Not the Apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word *we*, (used by a figure of speech, common in all other, as well as the inspired writings) the Apostle could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer, ap-

pears evidently, First, From the same word, in the ninth verse; "Therewith" (saith he) "bless we God, and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." True; but not out of the mouth of the Apostle, nor of any one who is in Christ a new creature. Secondly, From the verse immediately preceding the text, and manifestly connected with it: "My brethren, be not many Masters (or *teachers)* knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things *we* offend all:" *We!* Who? Not the Apostles, nor true believers; but they who knew they should *receive the greater condemnation*, because of those many offences. But this could not be spoken of the Apostle himself, or of any who trod in his steps: seeing "there is no condemnation for them, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Nay, Thirdly, The very verse itself proves, that *we offend all*, cannot be spoken, either of all men, or of all Christians; for in it, there immediately follows the mention of a man who *offends not*, as the *we* first mentioned did: from whom, therefore, he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced, *a perfect man.*

18. So clearly does St. James explain himself, and fix the meaning of his own words. Yet lest any one should still remain in doubt, St. John, writing many years after St. James, puts the matter entirely out of dispute, by the express declarations above recited. But here a fresh difficulty may arise. How shall we reconcile St. John with himself In one place, he declares, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin." And, again, "We know that he which is born of God, sinneth not." And yet in another, he saith, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

19. As great a difficulty as this may, at first, appear, it vanishes away, if we observe, First, That the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: "If we say we have no sin," in the former, being explained by, "If we say we have not

sinned," in the latter verse. Secondly, That the point under present consideration is not, whether we *have or have not sinned heretofore;* and neither of these verses asserts, that we *do sin, or commit sin* now. Thirdly, That the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:" as if he had said, "I have before affirmed, the 'blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' But let no man say, 'I need it not: I have no sin to be cleansed from.' If we say, 'that we have no sin, that we have not sinned,' we deceive ourselves and make God a liar. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, not only to forgive our sins, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," that we "go and sin no more."

20. St. John, therefore, is well consistent with himself, as well as with the other holy writers; as will yet more evidently appear, if we place all his assertions touching this matter in one view. He declares, First, The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Secondly, No man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. Thirdly, but God is ready both to forgive our past sins, and to save us from them for the time to come. Fourthly, "These things I write unto you," saith the Apostle, "that you may not sin; but if any man should sin," or *have sinned,* (as the word might be rendered) he need not continue in sin, seeing "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Thus far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain, in a point of so vast importance, the Apostle resumes this subject in the third chapter, and largely explains his own meaning: "Little children," saith he, let no man deceive you;" [as though I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin.] "He that doth righteousness, is righteous; even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is

born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," (verse 7—10.) Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired Writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion, *A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin.*

21. This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea, though he be but *a babe in Christ.* But it is only of those who *are strong* in the Lord, "and have overcome the wicked one," or rather of those who "have known him that is from the beginning," that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect; as, Secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts, and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. But here let it be observed, that thoughts concerning evil, are not always evil thoughts: that a thought concerning sin, and a sinful thought, are widely different. A man, for instance, may think of a murder which another has committed, and yet this is no evil or sinful thought. So our blessed Lord himself, doubtless thought of, or understood the thing spoken by the devil, when he said, "All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Yet had he no evil or sinful thought, nor indeed was capable of having any. And even hence it follows, that neither have real Christians. For "every one that is perfect is as his Master," Luke vi. 40. Therefore, if he were free from evil or sinful thoughts, so are they likewise.

22. And, indeed, whence should evil thoughts proceed, in the servant who is *as his Master?* "Out of the heart of man [*if at all*] proceed evil thoughts," Mark vii. 21. If, therefore, his heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts can no longer proceed out of it. If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit; but the tree is good. The fruit, therefore, is good also, Matt. xii. 33. Our Lord himself bearing witness, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, as a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 17, 18.

23. The same happy privilege of real Christians, St. Paul asserts from his own experience. "The weapons of our warfare," saith he, "are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations," [or *reasonings* rather, for so the word λογισμοὺς signifies; all the reasonings of pride and unbelief against the declarations, promises, or gifts of God;] "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, &c.

24. And as Christians indeed, are freed from evil thoughts, so are they, Secondly, from evil tempers. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord himself: "The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." He had been delivering, just before, some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, and some of the most grievous to flesh and blood. "I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you: and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." Now these he well knew the world would not receive; and, therefore, immediately adds, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" As if he had said, "Do not confer with flesh and blood touching these things, with men void of spiritual discernment, the eyes of whose understanding God hath not opened, lest they and you perish together." In the next verse he removes the two grand objections, with which these wise fools meet us at every turn, "These things are too grievous to be born," or, "They are too high to be attained:" Saying, "The disciple is not above his Master:" therefore, if I have suffered, be content to tread in my steps. And doubt ye not then, but I will fulfil my word: "For every one that is perfect, shall be as his Master." But his Master was free from all sinful tempers. So, therefore, is his disciple, even every real Christian.

25. Every one of these can say, with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward, as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, *I live not:* (My evil nature, the body of sin is destroyed:) and positively, *Christ liveth in me*, and, therefore, all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed, both these, *Christ liveth in me*, and *I live not*, are inseparably connected. For "what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?"

26. He, therefore, who liveth in true believers, hath "purified their hearts by faith:" insomuch that "every one that hath Christ in him, the hope of glory, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," (1 John iii. 3.) He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will, or desire; for Christ desired only to do the Will of his Father, and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. I say, in the common sense of the word; for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord himself, (Mark iii. 5,) that he once "looked round with anger." But with what kind of anger? The next word shews, συλλυπουμενος, being, "at the same time, grieved for the hardness of their hearts." So, then, he was angry at the sin, and, in the same moment, grieved for the sinners. Angry or displeased at the offence; but sorry for the offenders. With anger, yea, hatred, he looked upon the thing; with grief and love upon the persons. Go, thou that art perfect, and do likewise. *Be thus angry, and* thou *sinnest not:* feeling a displacency at every offence against God: but only love and tender compassion to the offender.

27. Thus doth Jesus "save his people from their sins:" and not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts, and from evil tempers. "True," say some, "we shall thus be saved from our sins; but not till death, not in this world." But how are we to reconcile this with the express words of St. John? "Herein

is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." The Apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation, he flatly affirms, that not only at, or after death, but *in this world*, they are as their Master, 1 John iv. 17.

28. Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first chapter of this Epistle, (verse 6, &c.) "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now it is evident, the Apostle here also speaks of a deliverance wrought *in this world*. For he saith not, *the blood of Christ will cleanse*, (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgmen) but it *cleanseth* (at the time present) *us* [living Christians] *from all sin*. And it is equally evident, that if *any sin* remain, we are not cleansed from *all sin*: if *any* unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from *all* unrighteousness. Neither let any sinner against his own soul say, that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin; First, Because this is confounding together what the Apostle clearly distinguishes; who mentions first, *to forgive us our sins*, and then *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Secondly, Because this is asserting justification by works in the strongest sense possible: it is making all inward, as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification. For, if the cleansing here spoken of, is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt; i. e. are not justified, unless on condition of *walking in the light, as he is in the light*. It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness: that they are now, in such a sense, perfect, as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers.

29. Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he spake by his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began: by Moses in particular, saying: (Deut. xxx. 6,) "I will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul:" by David crying out, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me:" and most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.—Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.—Thus saith the Lord God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities,—the heathen shall know, that I, the Lord, build the ruined places;—I, the Lord, have spoken it,—and I will do it," Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, &c.

30. "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved," both in the Law and in the Prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the gospel, by our blessed Lord and his Apostles: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Let us fear, lest so many promises being made us of entering into his rest, [which he that hath entered into, has ceased from his own works,] any of us should come short of it." "This one thing let us do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:" crying unto him day and night, till we also are "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

THE PROMISE OF SANCTIFICATION.

Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, *&c.*

BY THE REV. CHARLES WESLEY.

1 GOD of all Power, and Truth, and Grace,
Which shall from age to age endure;
Whose Word, when heaven and earth shall pass,
Remains, and stands for ever sure:

2 Calmly to thee my soul looks up,
And waits thy promises to prove;
The object of my steadfast hope,
The seal of thine eternal Love.

3 That I thy mercy may proclaim,
That all mankind thy truth may see,
Hallow thy great and glorious Name,
And perfect holiness in me.

4 Chose from the world, if now I stand
Adorn'd in righteousness divine,
If brought unto the promis'd land,
I justly call the Saviour mine;

5 Perform the work thou hast begun,
My inmost soul to thee convert:
Love me, for ever, love thine own,
And sprinkle, with thy blood, my heart.

6 Thy sanctifying Spirit pour,
To quench my thirst, and wash me clean;
Now, Father, let the gracious shower
Descend, and make me pure from sin.

7 Purge me from every sinful blot;
My idols all be cast aside:
Cleanse me from every evil thought;
From all the filth of self and pride.

8 Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The Mind which was in Christ impart,
And let my spirit cleave to thee.

9 O take this heart of stone away,
(Thy rule it doth not, cannot own)
In me no longer let it stay,
O take away this heart of stone.

10 The hatred of the carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove;
Give me a tender heart, resign'd,
And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.

11 Within me thy good Spirit place,
Spirit of health, and love, and power;
Plant in me thy victorious grace,
And sin shall never enter more.

12 Cause me to walk in Christ my Way,
And I thy statutes shall fulfil;
In every point thy law obey,
And perfectly perform thy will.

13 Hast thou not said, who canst not lie,
That I thy law shall keep and do?
Lord, I believe, though men deny;
They all are false; but thou art true.

14 O that I now, from sin releas'd,
Thy word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the promis'd Rest,
The Canaan of thy perfect love!

15 There let me ever, ever dwell;
Be thou my God, and I will be
Thy servant: O set to thy seal:
Give me eternal life in thee.

16 From all remaining filth within,
Let me in thee salvation have:
From actual, and from inbred sin,
My ransom'd soul persist to save.

17 Wash out my old original stain:
Tell me no more it cannot be,
Demons or men! The Lamb was slain,
His blood was all pour'd out for me.

18 Sprinkle it, Jesu, on my heart!
One drop of thy all-cleansing blood
Shall make my sinfulness depart,
And fill me with the Life of God.

19 Father, supply my every need;
Sustain the life thyself hast giv'n;
Call for the corn, the living bread,
The manna that comes down from heaven.

20 The gracious fruits of righteousness,
Thy blessings unexhausted store,
In me abundantly increase;
Nor let me ever hunger more.

21 Let me no more in deep complaint
"My leanness, O my leanness," cry!
Alone consum'd with pining want,
Of all my Father's children I!

22 The painful thirst, the fond desire,
Thy joyous presence shall remove;
While my full soul doth still require
Thy whole eternity of love.

23 Holy, and true, and righteous Lord,
I wait to prove thy perfect Will;
Be mindful of thy gracious Word,
And stamp me with thy Spirit's Seal.

24 Thy faithful mercies let me find,
In which thou causest me to trust;
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And lay my spirit in the dust.

25 Shew me how foul my heart hath been,
When all renew'd by grace I am:
When thou hast emptied me of sin,
Shew me the fulness of my shame.

26 Open my faith's interior eye,
Display thy glory from above;
And all I am shall sink and die,
Lost in astonishment and love.

27 Confound, o'erpower me with thy grace,
I would be by myself abhorr'd,
(All might, all majesty, all praise,
All glory be to Christ my Lord!)

28 Now let me gain perfection's height!
Now let me into nothing fall!
Be less than nothing in my sight,
And feel that Christ is all in all!

SERMON XLIII.

ON WANDERING THOUGHTS.

2 CORINTHIANS X. 4.

"*Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of* CHRIST."

1. BUT will God so "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," that no wandering thought will find a place in the mind, even while we remain in the body? So some have vehemently maintained: yea, have affirmed, that none are perfected in love, unless they are so far perfected in understanding, that all wandering thoughts are done away: unless, not only every affection and temper be holy, and just, and good, but every individual thought which arises in the mind, be wise and regular.

2. This is a question of no small importance. For how many of those who fear God, yea and love him, perhaps with all their hearts, have been greatly distressed on this account! How many, by not understanding it right, have not only been distressed, but greatly hurt in their souls! Cast into unprofitable, yea, mischievous reasonings, such as slackened their motion towards God, and weakened them in running the race set before them! Nay, many, through misapprehensions of this very thing, have cast away the precious gift of God. They have been induced, first, to

doubt of, and then to deny the work God had wrought in their souls; and hereby have grieved the Spirit of God, till he withdrew and left them in utter darkness.

3. How is it, then, that amidst the abundance of books which have been lately published almost on all subjects, we should have none upon Wandering Thoughts? At least none that will at all satisfy a calm and serious mind? In order to do this in some degree, I purpose to enquire,

I. What are the several sorts of Wandering Thoughts?
II. What are the general occasions of them?
III. Which of them are sinful, and which not?
IV. Which of them we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

I. 1. I purpose to enquire, First, What are the several sorts of Wandering Thoughts? The particular sorts are innumerable; but, in general, they are of two sorts, thoughts that wander from God, and thoughts that wander from the particular point we have in hand.

2. With regard to the former, all our thoughts are naturally of this kind. For they are continually wandering from God: we think nothing about him. God is not in all our thoughts: We are one and all, as the apostle observes, "without God in the world." We think of what we love: but we do not love God: therefore, we think not of him. Or, if we are now and then constrained to think of him for a time, yet as we have no pleasure therein, nay rather, as these thoughts are not only insipid, but distasteful and irksome to us, we drive them out as soon as we can, and return to what we love to think of. So that the world and the things of the world, what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on; what we shall see, what we shall hear, what we shall gain; how we shall please our senses or our imagination, take up all our time, and engross all our thoughts. So long, therefore, as we love the world, that is, so long as we are in our natural state, all our thoughts, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, are no other than wandering thoughts.

3. But many times we are not only "without God in the world," but also fighting against him: as there is in every man by nature a "carnal mind which is enmity against God:" no wonder, therefore, that men abound with unbelieving thoughts; either saying in their hearts, there is no God, or questioning, if not denying his power or wisdom, his mercy, or justice, or holiness. No wonder, that they so often doubt of his providence, at least, of its extending to all events; or that even though they allow it, they still entertain murmuring or repining thoughts. Nearly related to these, and frequently connected with them, are proud and vain imaginations. Again: sometimes they are taken up with angry, malicious, or revengeful thoughts: at other times, with airy scenes of pleasure, whether of sense or imagination; whereby the earthy, sensual mind, becomes more earthy and sensual still. Now, by all these they make flat war with God; these are wandering thoughts of the highest kind.

4. Widely different from these are the other sort of wandering thoughts: in which the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point it had then in view. For instance: I sit down to consider those words in the verse preceding the text, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." I think, "this ought to be the case with all who are called Christians. But how far is it otherwise! Look round into almost every part of what is termed the Christian world! What manner of weapons are these using! In what kind of warfare are they engaged,

> 'While men, like fiends, each other tear
> In all the hellish rage of war!'

See how these Christians love one another! Wherein are they preferable to Turks and Pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or Heathens, which is not found among Christians also?" And thus my mind runs off, before I am aware, from one circumstance to another. Now all these are, in some sense, wandering thoughts. For although they do not wander from God,

much less fight against him, yet they do wander from the particular point I had in view.

II. Such is the nature, such are the sorts (to speak rather usefully, than philosophically) of wandering thoughts. But what are the general occasions of them? This we are, in the second place, to consider.

1. And it is easy to observe, that the occasion of the former sort of thoughts which oppose or wander from God, are, in general, sinful tempers. For instance: Why *is not God in all the thoughts*, in any of the thoughts of a natural man? For a plain reason; be he rich or poor, learned or unlearned, he is an atheist: (though not vulgarly so called); he neither knows nor loves God. Why are his thoughts continually wandering after the world? Because he is an idolater. He does not indeed worship an image, or bow down to the stock of a tree: yet is he sunk into equally damnable idolatry: he loves, that is, worships the world. He seeks happiness in the things that are seen, in the pleasures that perish in the using. Why is it that his thoughts are perpetually wandering from the very end of his being, the knowledge of God in Christ? Because he is an unbeliever; because he has no faith, or at least, no more than a devil. So all these wandering thoughts easily and naturally spring from that evil root of unbelief.

2. The case is the same in other instances; pride, anger, revenge, vanity, lust, covetousness, every one of them occasions thoughts suitable to its own nature. And so does every sinful temper, of which the human mind is capable. The particulars it is hardly possible, nor is it needful, to enumerate. It suffices to observe, that as many evil tempers as find a place in any soul, so many ways that soul will depart from God, by the worst kind of wandering thoughts.

3. The occasions of the latter kind of wandering thoughts, are exceedingly various. Multitudes of them are occasioned by the natural union between the soul and body. How immediately and how deeply is the understanding affected by a diseased body! Let but the blood move irregularly in the brain, and all regular thinking is at an end. Raging

madness ensues, and then farewell to all evenness of thought. Yea, let only the spirits be hurried or agitated to a certain degree, and a temporary madness, a delirium prevents all settled thought. And is not the same irregularity of thought, in a measure, occasioned by every nervous disorder? So does "the corruptible body press down the soul, and cause it to muse about many things."

4. But does it only cause this in the time of sickness, of preternatural disorder? Nay, but more or less, at all times, even in a state of perfect health. Let a man be ever so healthy, he will be more or less delirious, every four and twenty hours. For does he not sleep? And while he sleeps, is he not liable to dream? And who then is master of his own thoughts, or able to preserve the order and consistency of them? Who can then keep them fixed to any one point, or prevent their wandering from pole to pole.

5. But suppose we are awake, are we always so awake, that we can steadily govern our thoughts? Are we not unavoidably exposed to contrary extremes, by the very nature of this machine, the body? Sometimes we are too heavy, too dull and languid, to pursue any chain of thought. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are too lively. The imagination, without leave, starts to and fro, and carries us away, hither and thither, whether we will or not: and all this, from the merely natural motion of the spirits, or vibration of the nerves.

6. Farther: How many wanderings of thought may arise, from those various associations of our ideas, which are made entirely without our knowledge, and independently on our choice! How these connections are formed, we cannot tell: but they are formed in a thousand different manners. Nor is it in the power of the wisest or holiest of men, to break those associations, or to prevent what is the necessary consequence of them, as is matter of daily observation. Let the fire but touch one end of the train, and it immediately runs on to the other.

7. Once more: Let us fix our attention as studiously as

we are able on any subject, yet let either pleasure or pain arise, especially if it be intense, and it will demand our immediate attention, and attach our thought to itself. It will interrupt the steadiest contemplation, and divert the mind from its favourite subject.

8. These occasions of wandering thoughts lie within, and are wrought into our very nature. But they will likewise naturally and necessarily arise, from the various impulses of outward objects. Whatever strikes upon the organs of sense, the eye or ear, will raise a perception in the mind. And accordingly, whatever we see, or hear, will break in upon our former train of thoughts. Every man, therefore, that does any thing in our sight, or speaks any thing in our hearing, occasions our mind to wander, more or less, from the point it was thinking of before.

9. And there is no question but those evil spirits, who are continually seeking whom they may devour, make use of all the foregoing occasions, to hurry and distract our minds. Sometimes by one, sometimes by another of these means, they will harass and perplex us, and so far as God permits, interrupt our thoughts, particularly when they are engaged on the best subjects. Nor is this at all strange: they well understand the very springs of thought, and know on which of the bodily organs, the imagination, the understanding, and every other faculty of the mind, more immediately depends. And hereby they know, how by affecting those organs, to affect the operations dependent on them. Add to this, that they can inject a thousand thoughts, without any of the preceding means: it being as natural for spirit to act upon spirit, as for matter to act upon matter. These things being considered, we cannot wonder, that our thoughts so often wander from any point which we have in view.

III. 1. What kind of wandering thoughts are sinful, and what not, is the third thing to be enquired into. And, First, All those thoughts which wander from God, which leave him no room in our minds, are undoubtedly sinful. For all these imply practical Atheism, and by these we are

without God in the world. And so much more are all those which are contrary to God, which imply opposition, or enmity to him. Such are all murmuring, discontented thoughts, which say, in effect, We will not have thee to rule over us: all unbelieving thoughts, whether with regard to his Being, his Attributes, or his Providence. I mean his particular Providence over all things, as well as all persons in the universe: that without which "not a sparrow falls to the ground," by which "the hairs of our head are all numbered." For as to a general Providence, (vulgarly so called), contradistinguished from a particular, it is only a decent, well-sounding word, which means just nothing.

2. Again: All thoughts which spring from sinful tempers, are undoubtedly sinful. Such, for instance, are those that spring from a revengeful temper, from pride, or lust, or vanity. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Therefore, if the tree be evil, so must the fruit be also.

3. And so must those be, which either produce or feed any sinful temper: those which either give rise to pride or vanity, to anger or love of the world, or confirm and increase these or any other unholy temper, passion, or affections. For, not only whatever flows from evil is evil, but also whatever leads to it; whatever tends to alienate the soul from God, and to make or keep it earthly, sensual, and devilish.

4. Hence, even those thoughts, which are occasioned by weakness or disease, by the natural mechanism of the body, or by the laws of vital union, however innocent they may be in themselves, do nevertheless become sinful, when they either produce or cherish and increase in us any sinful temper: suppose the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. In like manner, the wandering thoughts, which are occasioned by the words or actions of other men, if they cause or feed any wrong disposition, then commence sinful. And the same we may observe of those which are suggested or injected by the devil. When they minister to any earthly or devilish temper, (which they do, whenever we give place to them, and thereby make them

our own), then they are equally sinful, with the tempers to which they minister.

5. But, abstracting from these cases, wandering thoughts, in the latter sense of the word, that is, Thoughts wherein our understanding wanders from the point it has in view, are no more sinful than the motion of blood in our veins, or of the spirits in our brain. If they arise from an infirm constitution, or from some accidental weakness or distemper, they are as innocent as it is to have a weak constitution, or a distempered body. And surely no one doubts but a bad state of nerves, a fever of any kind, and either a transient or a lasting delirium, may consist with perfect innocence. And if they should arise in a soul which is united to an healthful body, either from the natural union between the body and soul, or from any of ten thousand changes, which may occur in the organs of the body, that minister to thought: in any of these cases they are as perfectly innocent as the causes from which they spring. And so they are when they spring from the casual, involuntary association of our ideas.

6. If our thoughts wander from the point we had in view, by means of other men, variously affecting our senses, they are equally innocent still: for it is no more a sin, to understand what I see and hear, and in many cases cannot help seeing, hearing, and understanding, than it is to have eyes and ears. "But if the devil inject wandering thoughts, are not those thoughts evil?" They are troublesome, and in that sense evil; but they are not sinful. I do not know that he spoke to our Lord with an audible voice: perhaps he spoke to his heart only, when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But whether he spoke inwardly or outwardly, our Lord doubtless understood what he said. He had therefore a thought correspondent to those words. But was it a sinful thought? We know it was not. In him was no sin, either in action, or word, or thought. Nor is there any sin in a thousand thoughts of the same kind, which Satan may inject into any of our Lord's followers.

7. It follows, that none of these wandering thoughts (whatever unwary persons have affirmed, thereby grieving whom the Lord had not grieved) are inconsistent with perfect love. Indeed if they were, then not only sharp pain, but sleep itself would be inconsistent with it: sharp pain; for whenever this supervenes, whatever we were before thinking of, it will interrupt our thinking, and of course draw our thoughts into another channel: yea, and sleep itself, as it is a state of insensibility and stupidity: and such as is generally mixed with thoughts wandering over the earth, loose, wild, and incoherent. Yet certainly these are consistent with perfect love: so then are all wandering thoughts of this kind.

IV. 1. From what has been observed, it is easy to give a clear answer to the last question, What kind of wandering thoughts may we expect and pray to be delivered from?

From the former sort of wandering thoughts, those wherein the heart wanders from God; from all that are contrary to his will, or that leave us without God in the world, every one that is perfect in love, is unquestionably delivered. This deliverance, therefore, we may expect: this we may, we ought to pray for. Wandering thoughts of this kind imply unbelief, if not enmity against God. But both of these he will destroy, will bring utterly to an end. And indeed, from all sinful wandering thoughts we shall be absolutely delivered. All that are perfected in love are delivered from these; else they were not saved from sin. Men and devils will tempt them all manner of ways. But they cannot prevail over them.

2. With regard to the latter sort of wandering thoughts, the case is widely different. Till the cause be removed, we cannot in reason expect the effect should cease. But the causes or occasions of these will remain, as long as we remain in the body. So long therefore we have all reason to believe, the effects will remain also.

3. To be more particular. Suppose a soul, however holy, to dwell in a distempered body. Suppose the brain be so thoroughly disordered, as that raging madness follows;

will not all the thoughts be wild and unconnected, as long as that disorder continues? Suppose a fever occasions that temporary madness, which we term a delirium, can there be any just connection of thought, till that delirium be removed? Yea, suppose what is called a nervous disorder to rise to so high a degree, as to occasion, at least, a partial madness, will there not be a thousand wandering thoughts? And must not these irregular thoughts continue, as long as the disorder which occasions them?

4. Will not the case be the same, with regard to those thoughts which necessarily arise from violent pain? They will more or less continue, while that pain continues, by the inviolable order of nature. This order likewise will obtain, where the thoughts are disturbed, broken, or interrupted, by any defect of the apprehension, judgment, or imagination, flowing from the natural constitution of the body. And how many interruptions may spring from the unaccountable and involuntary association of our ideas? Now all these are directly or indirectly caused by the corruptible body pressing down the mind. Nor therefore can we expect them to be removed, till "this corruptible shall put on incorruption."

5. And then only, when we lie down in the dust, shall we be delivered from those wandering thoughts which are occasioned by what we see and hear, among those by whom we are now surrounded. To avoid these, we must go out of the world. For as long as we remain therein, as long as there are men and women round about us, and we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, the things which we daily see and hear, will certainly affect our minds, and will more or less break in upon and interrupt our preceding thoughts.

6. And as long as evil spirits roam to and fro in a miserable, disordered world, so long they will assault (whether they can prevail or not) every inhabitant of flesh and blood. They will trouble even those whom they cannot destroy: they will attack, if they cannot conquer. And from these attacks, of our restless, unwearied enemies, we must not look for an entire deliverance, till we are lodged

"where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

7. To sum up the whole: To expect deliverance from those wandering thoughts, which are occasioned by evil spirits, is to expect that the devil should die or fall asleep; or at least should no more go about as a roaring lion. To expect deliverance from those which are occasioned by other men, is to expect either that men should cease from the earth; or that we should be absolutely secluded from them, and have no intercourse with them: or that having eyes we should not see, neither hear with our ears, but be as senseless as stocks or stones. And to pray for deliverance from those which are occasioned by the body, is in effect to pray that we may leave the body. Otherwise it is praying for impossibilities and absurdities; praying that God would reconcile contradictions, by continuing our union with a corruptible body, without the natural, necessary consequences of that union. It is as if we should pray to be angels and men, mortal and immortal at the same time. Nay, but when that which is immortal is come, mortality is done away.

8. Rather let us pray both with the spirit and with the understanding, that "all these things may work together for our good:" that we may suffer all the infirmities of our nature, all the interruptions of men, all the assaults and suggestions of evil spirits, and in all be "more than conquerors." Let us pray, That we may be delivered from all sin, that both root and branch may be destroyed: that we may be "cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit," from every evil temper, and word, and work: that we may "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength;" that all the fruits of the Spirit may be found in us; not only love, joy, peace; but also "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; fidelity, meekness, temperance." Pray that all "these things may flourish and abound, may increase in you more and more, till an abundant entrance be ministered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XLIV.

ON SATAN'S DEVICES.

2 CORINTHIANS II. 11.

"*We are not ignorant of his devices.*"

1. THE devices whereby the wise god of this world labours to destroy the children of God, or, at least, to torment whom he cannot destroy, to perplex and hinder them in running the race which is set before them, are numberless as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea-shore. But it is of one of them only that I now propose to speak, (although exerted in various ways) whereby he endeavours to divide the gospel against itself, and by one part of it to overthrow the other.

2. The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the hearts of all that repent and believe the gospel, is no other than "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Every babe in Christ knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus. But these are only the first-fruits of his Spirit: the harvest is not yet. Although these blessings are inconceivably great, yet we trust to see greater things than these. We trust to love the Lord our God, not only as we do now, with a weak though sincere affection, but "with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength." We

look for power to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks;" knowing, "this is the will of God concerning us in Christ Jesus."

3. We expect to be "made perfect in love," in that which *casts out* all painful *fear*, and all desire but that of glorifying him we love, of loving and serving him more and more. We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us always "to walk in the light, as he is in the light." We believe the whole *mind* will be in us *which was also in Christ Jesus:* that we shall love every man, so as to be ready "to lay down our lives for his sake:" so as by this love to be freed from anger, and pride, and from every unkind affection. We expect to be "cleansed from all our idols, from all filthiness, whether of flesh or spirit:" to be "saved from all our uncleannesses," inward or outward; to be "purified, as he is pure."

4. We trust in his promise who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when in every word and work we shall do his blessed Will on earth, as it is done in heaven: when all our conversation shall be seasoned with salt, all meet to minister grace to the hearers: when, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, it shall be done to the glory of God: when all our words and deeds shall be "in the Name of the Lord Jesus, while we give thanks unto God, even to God the Father, through him."

5. Now this is the grand device of Satan, to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or, at least, to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. It is therefore my present design, First, To point out the several ways whereby he endeavours this: and, Secondly, To observe how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may rise higher, by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

I. 1. I am, First, to point out the several ways whereby Satan endeavours to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or, at least, to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. And, 1. He endeavours to damp our

joy in the Lord, by the consideration of our own vileness, sinfulness, unworthiness; added to this, That there must be a far greater change than is yet, or we cannot see the Lord. If we knew we must remain as we are, even to the day of our death, we might possibly draw a kind of comfort, poor as it was, from that necessity. But as we know, we need not remain in this state, as we are assured there is a greater change to come, and that unless sin be all done away in this life, we cannot see God in glory; that subtle adversary often damps the joy we should otherwise feel in what we have already attained, by a perverse representation of what we have not attained, and the absolute necessity of attaining it. So that we cannot rejoice in what we have, because there is more which we have not. We cannot rightly taste the goodness of God, who hath done so great things for us, because there are so much greater things, which, as yet, he hath not done. Likewise, the deeper conviction God works in us of our present unholiness, and the more vehement desire we feel in our heart of the entire holiness he hath promised, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the present gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received, because of what we have not received.

2. If he can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will soon attack our peace also. He will suggest, "Are you fit to see God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How then can you flatter yourself, so as to imagine he beholds you with approbation? God is holy: you are unholy. What communion hath light with darkness? How is it possible that you, unclean as you are, should be in a state of acceptance with God? You see indeed the mark, the prize of your high calling; but do you not see it is afar off? How can you presume, then, to think, that all your sins are already blotted out? How can this be, until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more resemblance to him?" Thus will he endeavour, not only to shake your peace, but even to overturn the very foundation of it: to bring you back, by insensible degrees,

to the point, from whence you set out first, even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness: to make something in you the ground of your acceptance, or, at least, necessarily previous to it.

3. Or, if we hold fast, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;" and, I am "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus:" yet he will not cease to urge, "But the tree is known by its fruits. And have you the fruits of justification? Is that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus? Are you dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness? Are you made conformable to the death of Christ, and do you know the power of his resurrection?" And then, comparing the small fruits we feel in our souls, with the fulness of the promises, we shall be ready to conclude, Surely God hath not said, that my sins are forgiven me! Surely I have not received the remission of my sins; for what lot have I among them that are sanctified?

4. More especially in the time of sickness and pain, he will press this with all his might: "Is it not the word of Him that cannot lie, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord? But you are not holy; you know it well; you know holiness is the full image of God: and how far is this above, out of your sight? You cannot attain unto it. Therefore, all your labour has been in vain. All these things you have suffered in vain. You have spent your strength for nought. You are yet in your sins, and must, therefore, perish at the last." And thus, if your eye be not steadily fixed on him who hath borne all your sins, he will bring you again under that *fear of death*, whereby you were so long *subject unto bondage*: and, by this means, impair, if not wholly destroy, your peace, as well as joy in the Lord.

5. But his master-piece of subtilty is still behind. Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will carry his attempts farther yet: he will level his assault against your righteousness also. He will endeavour to shake, yea, if it be possible, to destroy the holiness you have already received,

by your very expectation of receiving more, of attaining all the image of God.

6. The manner wherein he attempts this, may partly appear from what has been already observed. For, first, By striking at our joy in the Lord, he strikes likewise at our holiness: seeing joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious mean of promoting every holy temper; a choice instrument of God, whereby he carries on much of his work in a believing soul. And it is a considerable help, not only to inward, but also to outward holiness. It strengthens our hands to go on in the work of faith, and in the labour of love; manfully to "fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life." It is peculiarly designed of God to be a balance both against inward and outward sufferings: to "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees." Consequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionably obstructs our holiness. And, therefore, so far as Satan shakes our joy, he hinders our holiness also.

7. The same effect will ensue, if he can, by any mean, either destroy or shake our peace. For the peace of God is another precious mean of advancing the image of God in us. There is scarce a greater help to holiness than this, a continual tranquillity of spirit, the evenness of a mind stayed upon God; a calm repose in the blood of Jesus. And without this, it is scarce possible to grow in grace, and in the vital knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For all fear (unless the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul. It binds all the springs of spiritual life, and stops all motion of the heart toward God. And doubt, as it were, bemires the soul, so that it sticks fast in the deep clay. Therefore, in the same proportion as either of these prevails, our growth in holiness is hindered.

8. At the same time that our wise adversary endeavours to make our conviction of the necessity of perfect love, an occasion of shaking our peace by doubts and fears, he endeavours to weaken, if not destroy, our faith. Indeed, these are inseparably connected, so that they must stand or fall together. So long as faith subsists, we remain in peace;

our heart stands fast, while it believes in the Lord. But if we let go our faith, our filial confidence in a loving, pardoning God, our peace is at an end, the very foundation on which it stood being overthrown. And this is the only foundation of holiness, as well as of peace; consequently, whatever strikes at this, strikes at the very root of all holiness: for without this faith, without an abiding sense, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me; without a continuing conviction, that God, for Christ's sake, is merciful to me a sinner, it is impossible that I should love God: "We love him, because he first loved us," and in proportion to the strength and clearness of our conviction, that he hath loved us, and accepted us in his Son. And unless we love God, it is not possible that we should love our neighbour as ourselves: nor, consequently, that we should have any right affections, either toward God, or toward man. It evidently follows, that whatever weakens our faith, must, in the same degree, obstruct our holiness. And this is not only the most effectual, but also the most compendious way of destroying all holiness. Seeing it does not affect merely some one Christian temper, some single grace or fruit of the Spirit, but, so far as it succeeds, tears up the very root of the whole work of God.

9. No marvel, therefore, that the Ruler of the darkness of this world should have put forth all his strength. And so we find by experience. For it is far easier to conceive, than it is to express, the unspeakable violence wherewith this temptation is frequently urged on them, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. When they see in a strong and clear light, on the one hand, the desperate wickedness of their own hearts; and, on the other hand, the unspotted holiness to which they are called in Christ Jesus: on the one hand, the depth of their own corruption, of their total alienation from God; on the other, the height of the glory of God, the image of the Holy One, wherein they are to be renewed: there is, many times, no spirit left in them; they could almost cry out, With God this is impossible. They are ready to give up both faith and hope, to cast away that

very confidence, whereby they are to overcome all things, and to do all things, through Christ strengthening them: whereby, "after they have done the will of God, they are to receive the promise."

10. And if they "hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end," they shall undoubtedly receive the promise of God, reaching through both time and eternity. But here is another snare laid for our feet. While we earnestly pant for that part of the promise which is to be accomplished here, "for the glorious liberty of the children of God," we may be led unawares from the consideration of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. Our eye may be insensibly turned aside from that crown, which the righteous Judge hath promised to give at that day, "to all that love his appearing:" and we may be drawn away from the view of that incorruptible inheritance, which is reserved in heaven for us. But this also would be a loss to our souls, and an obstruction to our holiness. For to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us. This it was, the having "respect unto the recompence of reward," which, of old time, encouraged Moses, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Nay, it is expressly said of a greater than he, That "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, till he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Whence we may easily infer, how much more needful for us is the view of that joy set before us, that we may endure whatever cross the wisdom of God lays upon us, and press on through holiness to glory.

11. But while we are reaching to this, as well as to that glorious liberty which is preparatory to it, we may be in danger of falling into another snare of the devil, whereby he labours to entangle the children of God. We may take too much *thought for to-morrow*, so as to neglect the improvement of to-day. We may so expect perfect love, as not

to use that, which is already shed abroad in our hearts. There have not been wanting instances of those, who have greatly suffered hereby. They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received. In expectation of having five talents more, they buried their one talent in the earth. At least, they did not improve it as they might have done, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls.

12. Thus does the subtle adversary of God and man endeavour to make void the counsel of God, by dividing the gospel against itself, and making one part of it overthrow the other: while the first work of God in the soul is destroyed by the expectation of his perfect work. We have seen several of the ways wherein he attempts this, by cutting off, as it were, the springs of holiness. But this he likewise does more directly, by making that blessed hope an occasion of unholy tempers.

13. Thus, whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises; when we pant after the fulness of God, as the hart after the water-brooks; when our soul breaketh out in fervent desire, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long a-coming?" he will not neglect the opportunity of tempting us to murmur against God. He will use all his wisdom, and all his strength, if, haply, in an unguarded hour, we may be influenced to repine at our Lord, for thus delaying his coming. At least, he will labour to excite some degree of fretfulness or impatience: and, perhaps, of envy at those, whom we believe to have already attained the prize of their high calling. He well knows, that by giving way to any of these tempers, we are pulling down the very thing we would build up. By thus following after perfect holiness, we become more unholy than before. Yea, there is great danger that our last state should be worse than the first: like them of whom the Apostle speaks, in those dreadful words, "It had been better they had never known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them."

14. And from hence he hopes to reap another advantage, even to bring up an evil report of the good way. He is sensible, how few are able to distinguish (and too many are not willing so to do) between the accidental abuse, and the natural tendency of a doctrine. These, therefore, will he continually blend together, with regard to the doctrine of Christian perfection: in order to prejudice the minds of unwary men against the glorious promises of God. And how frequently, how generally, I had almost said, how universally has he prevailed herein! For who is there that observes any of these accidental ill effects of this doctrine, and does not immediately conclude, This is its natural tendency? and does not readily cry out, "See, these are the fruits (meaning the natural, necessary fruits) of such doctrine?" Not so. They are fruits which may accidentally spring from the abuse of a great and precious truth. But the abuse of this, or any other Scriptural Doctrine, does by no means destroy its use. Neither can the unfaithfulness of man, perverting his right way, make the promise of God of none effect. No: let God be true, and every man a liar. The Word of the Lord, it shall stand. "Faithful is He that hath promised: He also will do it." Let us not then be "removed from the hope of the Gospel." Rather let us observe, which was the second thing proposed, how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may rise the higher by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

II. 1. And, first, does Satan endeavour to damp your joy in the Lord, by the consideration of your sinfulness; added to this, That without entire, universal holiness, no man can see the Lord? You may cast back this dart upon his own head, while, through the grace of God, the more you feel of your own vileness, the more you rejoice in confident hope, that all this shall be done away. While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel, though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a mean, not of lessening your humble joy, but rather of increasing it. "This and this, you may say, shall likewise perish from the presence of the Lord. Like as the wax melteth at the

fire, so shall this melt away before his face." By this mean, the greater the change is, which remains to be wrought in your soul, the more may you triumph in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of your salvation; who hath done so great things for you already, and will do so much greater things than these.

2. Secondly, The more vehemently he assaults your peace with that suggestion, "God is holy, you are unholy: you are immensely distant from that holiness, without which you cannot see God: How then can you be in the favour of God? How can you fancy you are justified?" Take the more earnest heed to hold fast that, "Not by works of righteousness which I have done, I am found in him:" I am "accepted in the Beloved;" not having my own righteousness, (as the cause, either in whole, or in part, of my justification before God,) "but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." O, bind this about your neck: Write it upon the table of your heart. Wear it as a bracelet upon your arm, as frontlets between your eyes: I am "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Value and esteem, more and more, that precious truth, "By grace we are saved, through faith." Admire, more and more, the free-grace of God, in so loving the world, as to give "his only Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect on the other, both contribute to establish your peace, and make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow on with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain in the day when the Lord cometh, to take full possession of your heart. Neither will sickness, nor pain, nor the approach of death, occasion any doubt or fear. You know a day, an hour, a moment, with God, is as a thousand years. He cannot be straitened for time, wherein to work whatever remains to be done in your soul. And God's time is always the best time. Therefore, be thou careful for nothing. Only make

thy requests known unto him, and that not only without doubt or fear, but with thanksgiving: as being previously assured, he cannot withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

3. Thirdly, The more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained. So much the more labour to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Never let that slip, I have "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" and, "the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Be this thy glory, and crown of rejoicing. And see that no one take thy crown. Hold that fast, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." And I now "have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, press on in the peace and joy of faith, to the renewal of thy whole soul, in the image of him that created thee. Meanwhile, cry continually to God, that thou mayest see that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan represents it, in a horrid, dreadful shape, but in its genuine, native beauty: not as something that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most desirable gift, which is in all the stores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in the true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more: thy whole soul will be athirst for God, and for this glorious conformity to his likeness. And, having received a good hope of this, and strong consolation through grace, thou wilt no more be weary or faint in thy mind, but wilt follow on till thou attain.

4. In the same power of faith, press on to glory. Indeed, this is the same prospect still. God hath joined from the beginning, pardon, holiness, heaven. And why should man put them asunder? O, beware of this! Let not one link of the golden chain be broken. God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven me. He is now renewing me in his own image.

Shortly he will make me meet for himself, and take me to stand before his face. I, whom he hath justified through the blood of his Son, being thoroughly sanctified by his Spirit, shall quickly ascend to the "New Jerusalem, the City of the living God." Yet a little while, and I shall "come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." How soon will these shadows flee away, and the day of eternity dawn upon me! How soon shall I drink of "the river of the Water of Life, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? There all his servants shall praise him, and shall see his face, and his Name shall be upon their foreheads. And no night shall be there; and they have no need of a candle, or the light of the sun. For the Lord God enlighteneth them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

5. And if you thus "taste of the good word, and the powers of the world to come," you will not murmur against God, because you are not yet meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Instead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praise God for thus far delivering you. You will magnify God for what he hath done, and take it as an earnest of what he will do. You will not fret against him, because you are not yet renewed, but bless him because you shall be; and because *now is your salvation* from all sin, *nearer than when you* first *believed.* Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing that it "will come, and will not tarry." You may, therefore, the more cheerfully endure as yet, the burden of sin that still remains in you, because it will not always remain. Yet a little while, and it shall be clean gone. Only "tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

6. And if you see any who appear, (so far as man can judge, but God alone searcheth the hearts,) to be already partakers of their hope, already "made perfect in love:" far from envying the grace of God in them, let it rejoice and

comfort your heart. Glorify God for their sakes. "If one member is honoured," shall not "all the members rejoice with it?" Instead of jealousy or evil surmising concerning them, praise God for the consolation. Rejoice in having a fresh proof of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling all his promises. And stir yourself up the more, to "apprehend that for which you also are apprehended of Christ Jesus."

7. In order to this, redeem the time. Improve the present moment. Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace, or of doing good. Let not the thought of receiving more grace to-morrow, make you negligent of to-day. You have one talent now. If you expect five more, so much then rather improve that you have. And the more you expect to receive hereafter, the more labour for God now. Sufficient for the day is the grace thereof. God is now pouring his benefits upon you. Now approve yourself a faithful steward of the present grace of God. Whatever may be to-morrow, give all diligence to-day, to "add to your faith, courage,—temperance,—patience,—brotherly-kindness, and—the fear of God," till you attain that pure and perfect love. Let *these things be* now *in you, and abound.* Be not now slothful or unfruitful. "So shall an entrance be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

6. Lastly: If in time past you have abused this blessed hope of being holy, as he is holy, yet do not, therefore, cast it away. Let the abuse cease, the use remain. Use it now to the more abundant glory of God, and profit of your own soul. In steadfast faith, in calm tranquillity of spirit, in full assurance of hope, rejoicing evermore for what God hath done, *press on unto perfection.* Daily growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what you have attained, and for what you shall attain, run the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus," till, through perfect love, you enter into his glory!

SERMON XLV.

Preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners, on Sunday, Jan. 30, 1763, at the Chapel in West-Street, Seven-Dials.

Psalm xciv. 16.

"*Who will rise up with me against the wicked?*"

1. IN all ages, men, who neither feared God, nor regarded man, have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shewn themselves wise in their generation; for by this mean they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father, the devil, than they otherwise could have done. On the other hand, men, who feared God and desired the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have, in every age, found it needful to join together, in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed He himself has instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one spirit. And for this very end He has joined them together, "that He might destroy the works of the devil," first in them that are already united, and by them in all that are round about them.

2. This is the original design of the Church of Christ.

It is a body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul, then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavour of every member of his church. Otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ.

3. Accordingly this ought to be the constant care and endeavour of all those, who are united together in these kingdoms, and are commonly called *The Church of England.* They are united together for this very end, to oppose the devil and all his works, and to wage war against the world and the flesh, his constant and faithful allies. But do they, in fact, answer the end of their union? Are all who stile themselves *Members of the Church of England*, heartily engaged in opposing the works of the devil, and fighting against the world and the flesh? Alas, we cannot say this. So far from it, that a great part, I fear, the greater part of them, are themselves *the World*, the people that know not God, to any saving purpose: are indulging day by day, instead of "mortifying the flesh, with its affections and desires;" and doing, themselves, those works of the devil, which they are peculiarly engaged to destroy.

4. There is, therefore, still need, even in this *Christian Country*, (as we *courteously* stile Great Britain,) yea, in this *Christian Church*, (if we may give that title to the bulk of our nation,) of some to *rise up against the wicked*, and join together *against the evil doers.* Nay, there was never more need than there is at this day, for *them that fear the Lord*, to *speak often together*, on this very head, How they may *lift up a standard against the iniquity* which overflows the land. There is abundant cause for all the servants of God, to join together against the works of the devil, with united hearts, and counsels, and endeavours, to make a stand for God, and to repress, as much as in them lies, these "floods of ungodliness."

5. For this end a few persons in London, towards the close of the last century, united together, and, after a while, were termed, *The Society for Reformation of Manners.* And incredible good was done by them, for near forty years. But then most of the original members, being gone to their reward, those who succeeded them grew faint in their minds, and departed from the work. So that, a few years ago, the Society ceased, nor did any of the kind remain in the kingdom.

6. It is a Society of the same nature, which has been lately formed. I purpose to shew, First, The *Nature* of their Design, and the *Steps* they have hitherto taken: Secondly, The *Excellency* of it, with the various *Objections* which have been raised against it: Thirdly, *What manner of men* they ought to be, who engage in such a design: and, Fourthly, With what *Spirit*, and in what *Manner* they should proceed, in the prosecution of it. I shall conclude with an *Application* both to them, and to all that fear God.

I. 1. I am, First, to shew the *Nature* of their Design, and the *Steps* they have hitherto taken.

It was on a Lord's-Day in August 1757, that in a small company, who were met for prayer and religious conversation, mention was made of the gross, and open profanation of that sacred day, by persons buying and selling, keeping open shop, tippling in alehouses, and standing or sitting in the streets, roads, or fields, vending their wares as on common days: especially in Moor-fields, which was then full of them every Sunday, from one end to the other. It was considered, What Method could be taken, to redress these grievances, and it was agreed, That six of them should, in the morning, wait upon Sir John Fielding for instruction. They did so. He approved of the design, and directed them how to carry it into execution.

2. They, first, delivered Petitions to the right honourable the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, to the Justices sitting at Hick's-Hall, and those in Westminster. And they received much encouragement to proceed.

3. It was next judged proper, to signify their design to many persons of eminent rank, and to the body of the Clergy, as well as the Ministers of other denominations, belonging to the several churches and meetings, in and about the cities of London and Westminster. And they had the satisfaction to meet with an hearty consent and universal approbation from them.

4. They then printed and dispersed, at their own expense, several thousands of books of instruction, to Constables and other Parish-Officers, explaining and enforcing their several duties. And to prevent, as far as possible, the necessity of proceeding to an actual execution of the laws, they likewise printed and dispersed in all parts of the town, dissuasives from Sabbath-breaking, extracts from Acts of Parliament against it, and Notices to the offenders.

5. The way being paved by these precautions, it was in the beginning of the year 1758, that after notices delivered again and again, which were as often set at nought, actual informations were made to the Magistrates, against persons profaning the Lord's-Day. By this mean they, first, cleared the streets of those notorious offenders, who, without any regard either to God or the king, were selling their wares from morning to night. They proceeded to a more difficult attempt, the preventing Tippling on the Lord's-Day, spendingthe time in Alehouses which ought to be spent in the more immediate worship of God. Herein they were exposed to abundance of reproach, to insult and abuse of every kind; having not only the tipplers and those who entertained them, the alehouse-keepers, to contend with, but rich and honourable men, partly the landlords of those alehouse-keepers, partly those who furnished them with drink, and in general all who gained by their sins. Some of these were not only men of substance, but men in authority; nay, in more instances than one, they were the very persons before whom the Delinquents were brought. And the treatment they gave those who laid the Informations, naturally encouraged *the beasts of the people*, to follow their example, and to use them as fellows not fit to live upon the earth.

Hence, they made no scruple, not only to treat them with the basest language, not only to throw at them mud and stones, or whatever came to hand, but many times to beat them without mercy, and to drag them over the stones, or through the kennels. And that they did not murder them was not for want of will; but the bridle was in their teeth.

6. Having, therefore, received help from God, they went on to restrain Bakers likewise, from spending so great a part of the Lord's-Day, in exercising the works of their calling.* But many of these were more noble than the Victuallers. They were so far from resenting this, or looking upon it as an affront, that several, who had been hurried down the stream of custom, to act contrary to their own consciences, sincerely thanked them for their labour, and acknowledged it as a real kindness.

7. In clearing the streets, fields, and alehouses of sabbath-breakers, they fell upon another sort of offenders as mischievous to society as any, namely, Gamesters of various kinds. Some of these were of the lowest and vilest class, commonly called Gamblers, who made a trade of seizing on young and inexperienced men, and tricking them out of all their money. And after they have beggared them, they frequently teach them the same mystery of iniquity. Several nests of these they have rooted out, and constrained not a few of them honestly to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and the labour of their hands.

8. Increasing in number and strength, they extended their views, and began, not only to repress profane swearing, but to remove out of our streets, another public nuisance and scandal of the Christian name, Common Prostitutes. Many of these were stopped in their mad career of audacious wickedness. And, in order to go to the root of the disease, many of the houses that entertained them, have been detected, prosecuted according to law, and totally suppressed. And some of the poor desolate women themselves tho' fallen to

"The lowest line of human infamy,"

* They did not mean by this, the restraining them from baking provision for the poor.

have acknowledged the gracious providence of God, and broke off their sins by lasting repentance. Several of these have been placed out, and several received into the Magdalen Hospital.

9. If a little digression may be allowed, who can sufficiently admire the Wisdom of Divine Providence, in the disposal of the times and seasons, so as to suit one concurrence to another? For instance, : Just at a time when many of these poor creatures, being stopped in their course of sin, found a desire of leading a better life, as it were in answer to that sad question, "But if I quit the way I am now in, what can I do to live? For I am not mistress of any trade; and I have no friends that will receive me:" I say, just at this time, God has prepared the Magdalen Hospital. Here those who have no trade, nor any friends to receive them, are received with all tenderness; yea, they may live, and that with comfort, being provided with all things that are needful "for life and godliness."

10. But to return. The number of persons brought to justice, from August 1757, to August 1762, is 9596

From thence to the present time.

For unlawful Gaming, and profane Swearing,	40
For Sabbath-breaking,	400
Lewd Women and keepers of ill houses,	550
For offering to sale obscene Prints,	2
In all,	10,588

11. In the admission of members into the Society, no regard is had to any particular sect or party. Whoever is found, upon enquiry, to be a good man, is readily admitted. And none who has selfish or pecuniary views, will long continue therein: not only because he can gain nothing thereby, but because he would quickly be a loser: inasmuch as he must commence subscriber, as soon as he is a member. Indeed, the vulgar cry is, "These are all Whitefieldites." But it is a grand mistake. About twenty of the constantly subscribing members, are all that are in connexion with Mr. Whitefield. About fifty are in connexion with Mr. Wesley.

About twenty who are of the Established Church, have no connexion with either: and about seventy are Dissenters, who make, in all, an hundred and sixty. There are indeed many more, who assist in the work by occasional subscriptions.

II. 1. These are the *steps* which have been hitherto taken in prosecution of this design. I am, in the second place, to shew, the *excellency* thereof, notwithstanding the objections which have been raised against it. Now this may appear from several considerations. And first, from hence, That the making an open stand, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, which overspread our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of his enemies. It is giving glory to God, and shewing mankind, that even in these dregs of time,

—"There are, who faith prefer,
Tho' few, and piety to God."

And what more excellent, than to render to God the honour due unto his name? To declare, by a stronger proof than words, even by suffering, and running all hazards, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless, there is a God that judgeth the earth?"

2. How excellent is the design, to prevent, in any degree, the dishonour done to his glorious Name, the contempt which is poured on his authority, and the scandal brought upon our holy religion, by the gross, flagrant wickedness of those who are still called by the Name of Christ? To stem, in any degree, the torrent of vice, to repress the floods of ungodliness, to remove, in any measure, those occasions of blaspheming the worthy Name whereby we are called, is one of the noblest designs that can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive.

3. And as this design thus evidently tends to bring "glory to God in the highest," so it no less manifestly conduces to the establishing "peace upon earth." For as all sin directly tends, both to destroy our peace with God, by setting him at open defiance, to banish peace from our own breasts, and

to set every man's sword against his neighbour: so whatever prevents or removes sin, does, in the same degree, promote peace, both peace in our own souls, peace with God, and with one another. Such are the genuine fruits of this design, even in the present world. But why should we confine our views to the narrow bounds of time and space? Rather pass over these into eternity. And what fruit of it shall we find there? Let the apostle speak: "Brethren, if one of you err from the truth, and one convert him," (not to this or that opinion, but to God,) "let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins," Jam. v. 19, 20.

4. Nor is it to individuals only, whether those who betray others into sin, or those that are liable to be betrayed and destroyed by them, that the benefit of this design redounds, but to the whole community whereof we are members. For is it not a sure observation, "righteousness exalteth a nation?" And is it not as sure on the other hand, that *sin is a reproach* to any *people?* yea, and bringeth down the curse of God upon them? So far, therefore, as righteousness, in any branch, is promoted, so far is the national interest advanced. So far as sin, especially open sin, is restrained, the curse and reproach are removed from us. Whoever, therefore, they are that labour herein, they are general benefactors. They are the truest friends of their king and country. And in the same proportion as their design takes place, there can be no doubt, but God will give national prosperity in accomplishment of his faithful word, "Them that honour me, I will honour."

5. But it is objected, "However excellent a design this is, it does not concern *you*. For are there not persons, to whom the repressing these offences, and punishing the offenders, properly belong? Are there not constables and other parish officers, who are bound by oath to this very thing?" There are. Constables and church-wardens, in particular, are engaged, by solemn oaths, to give due information against profaners of the Lord's-day, and all other scandalous

sinners. But, if they leave it undone, if, notwithstanding their oaths, they trouble not themselves about the matter, it concerns all that fear God, that love mankind, and that wish well to their king and country, to pursue this design with the very same vigour, as if there were no such officers existing. It being just the same thing, if they are of no use, as if they had no being.

6. "But this is only a pretence: their real design is to get money by giving information." So it has frequently and roundly been affirmed; but without the least shadow of truth. The contrary may be proved by a thousand instances: no member of the society takes any part of the money which is by the law allotted to the informer. They never did from the beginning: nor does any of them ever receive any thing, to suppress or withdraw their information. This is another mistake, if not wilful slander, for which there is not the least foundation.

7. "But the design is impracticable. Vice is risen to such a head, that it is impossible to suppress it: especially by such means. For what can a handful of poor people do, in opposition to all the world?" "With men this is impossible, but not with God." And they trust not in themselves, but him. Be then the patrons of vice never so strong, to him they are no more than grasshoppers. And all means are alike to him. It is the same thing with God "to deliver by many or by few." The small number, therefore, of those who are on the Lord's side, is nothing; neither the great number of those that are against him. Still he doth whatever pleaseth him. And "there is no counsel nor strength against the Lord."

8. "But if the end you aim at be really to reform sinners, you choose the wrong means. It is the word of God must effect this, and not human laws. And it is the work of ministers, not of magistrates. Therefore, the applying to these can only produce an outward reformation. It makes no change in the heart."

It is true the word of God is the chief, ordinary mean, whereby he changes both the hearts and lives of sinners:

and he does this, chiefly by the ministers of the gospel. But it is likewise true, that the magistrate is *the minister of God:* and that he is designed of God *to be a terror to evil doers*, by executing human laws upon them. If this do not change the heart, yet, to prevent outward sin is one valuable point gained. There is so much the less dishonour done to God; less scandal brought on our holy religion; less curse and reproach upon our nation; less temptation laid in the way of others; yea, and less wrath heaped up by the sinners themselves against the day of wrath.

9. "Nay, rather more: for it makes many of them hypocrites, pretending to be what they are not. Others, by exposing them to shame, and putting them to expense, are made impudent and desperate in wickedness: so that in reality none of them are any better, if they are not worse than they were before."

This is a mistake all over. For, 1. Where are these hypocrites? We know none who have pretended to be what they are not. 2. The exposing obstinate offenders to shame, and putting them to expense, does not make them desperate in offending, but afraid to offend. 3. Some of them, far from being worse, are substantially better, the whole tenor of their lives being changed. Yea, 4. Some are inwardly changed, even "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

10. "But many are not convinced, that buying or selling on the Lord's-day is a sin."

If they are not convinced, they ought to be: it is high time they should. The case is as plain as plain can be. For if an open, wilful breach, both of the law of God, and the law of the land, be not sin, pray what is? And if such a breach of divine and human laws be not to be punished, because a man is not convinced it is a sin, there is an end of all execution of justice, and all men may live as they list.

11. "But *mild* methods ought to be tried first." They ought. And so they are. A mild admonition is given to every offender, before the law is put in execution against

him: nor is any man prosecuted, till he has express notice, that this will be the case, unless he will prevent that prosecution, by removing the cause of it. In every case, the mildest method is used which the nature of the case will bear: nor are severer means ever applied, but when they are absolutely necessary to the end.

12. "Well, but after all this stir about reformation, what real good has been done?" Unspeakable good; and abundantly more than any one could have expected, in so short a time, considering the small number of the instruments, and the difficulties they had to encounter. Much evil has been prevented, and much has been removed. Many sinners have been outwardly reformed; some have been inwardly changed. The honour of him whose Name we bear, so openly affronted, has been openly defended. And it is not easy to determine, how many, and how great blessings, even this little stand, made for God and his cause, against his daring enemies, may already have derived upon our whole nation. On the whole, then, after all the objections that can be made, reasonable men may still conclude, a more excellent design could scarce ever enter into the heart of man.

III. 1. But, *what manner of men* ought they to be, who engage in such a design? Some may imagine, any that are willing to assist therein, ought readily to be admitted; and that the greater the number of members, the greater will be their influence. But this is by no means true; matter of fact undeniably proves the contrary. While the former society for the reformation of manners, consisted of chosen members only, though neither many, rich, nor powerful, they broke through all opposition, and were eminently successful in every branch of their undertaking. But when a number of men, less carefully chosen, were received into that society, they grew less and less useful, till, by insensible degrees, they dwindled into nothing.

2. The number, therefore, of the members, is no more to be attended to, than their riches or eminence. This is a work of God. It is undertaken in the name of God, and

for his sake. It follows, that men who neither love nor fear God, have no part nor lot in this matter. "Why takest thou my covenant in thy mouth," may God say to any of these, "whereas thou" thyself "hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee?" Whoever, therefore, lives in any known sin, is not fit to engage in reforming sinners. More especially if he be guilty in any instance, or in the least degree, of profaning the name of God, or buying, or selling, or doing any unnecessary work on the Lord's-day, or offending in any other of those instances, which this society is peculiarly designed to reform. No: let none who stands himself in need of this reformation, presume to meddle with such an undertaking. First, let him "pull the beam out of his own eye." Let him be himself *unblamable* in all things.

3. Not that this will suffice. Every one engaging herein, should be more than a harmless man. He should be a man of *faith:* having, at least, such a degree of that "evidence of things not seen," as to aim, "not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at those that are not seen, which are eternal:" such a faith as produces a steady *fear of God*, with a lasting resolution, by his grace, to abstain from all that he has forbidden, and to do all that he has commanded. He will more especially need that particular branch of faith, *confidence in God.* It is this faith which *removes mountains*, which *quenches the violence of fire*, which breaks through all opposition, and enables *one* to stand against and *chase a thousand*, knowing in whom his strength lies, and even when he has "the sentence of death in himself, trusting in him who raiseth the dead."

4. He that has faith and confidence in God, will of consequence be a man of *courage.* And such it is highly needful every man should be, who engages in this undertaking. For many things will occur in the prosecution thereof, which are terrible to nature; indeed, so terrible, that all who "confer with flesh and blood," will be afraid to encounter them. Here, therefore, true courage has its

proper place, and is necessary in the highest degree. And this, faith only can supply. A believer can say,

> "I fear no denial; no danger I fear:
> Nor start from the trial; for Jesus is near."

5. To *courage, patience* is nearly allied: the one regarding future, the other present evils. And whoever joins in carrying on a design of this nature, will have great occasion for this. For, notwithstanding all his unblamableness, he will find himself just in Ishmael's situation, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him." And no wonder. If it be true, that "all who will live godly, shall suffer persecution," how eminently must this be fulfilled in them, who, not content to live godly themselves, compel the ungodly to do so too, or, at least, to refrain from notorious ungodliness? Is not this declaring war against all the world? Setting all the children of the devil at defiance? And will not Satan himself, "*the prince of this world, the ruler of the darkness* thereof," exert all his subtlety and all his force, in support of his tottering kingdom? Who can expect the *roaring lion* will tamely submit to have the prey plucked out of his teeth? "Ye have therefore need of patience, that when ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

6. And ye have need of *steadiness*, that ye may "hold fast *this* profession of your faith, without wavering." This also should be found in all that unite in this society; which is not a task for a *double-minded man*, for one that is *unstable in his ways*. He that is as a reed shaken with the wind, is not fit for this warfare, which demands a firm purpose of soul, a constant, determined resolution. One that is wanting in this, may "set his hand to the plough:" but how soon will he "look back?" He may, indeed, "endure for a time. But when persecution or tribulation," public or private troubles, "arise because of the" work, "immediately he is offended."

7. Indeed, it is hard for any to persevere in so unpleasing

a work, unless *love* overpower both pain and fear. And, therefore, it is highly expedient, that all engaged therein should have "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts;" that they should all be able to declare, "we love him, because he first loved us." The presence of him, whom their soul so loveth, will then make their labour light. They can then say, not from the wildness of an heated imagination, but with the utmost truth and soberness,

"With thee conversing, I forget
All time, and toil, and care:
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
While thou, my God, art here."

8. What adds a still greater sweetness, even to labour and pain, is the christian "love of our neighbour." When they "love their neighbour," that is, every soul of man, "as themselves," as their own souls; when "the love of Christ constrains" them to love one another, "even as he loved us;" when, as he "tasted death for every man," so they are "ready to lay down their lives for their brethren," (including in that number, "every man," every soul for which Christ died:) what prospect of danger will then be able to fright them from their labour of love? What suffering will they not be ready to undergo, to save one soul from everlasting burnings? What continuance of labour, disappointment, pain, will vanquish their fixed resolution? Will they not be

"'Gainst all repulses steel'd, nor ever tir'd,
With toilsome day, or ill-succeeding night?"

So, love both "hopeth and endureth all things." So, "charity never faileth."

9. Love is necessary for all the members of such a society, on another account likewise; even because "it is not puffed up;" it produces not only courage and patience, but Humility. And, O! how needful is this for all who are so employed! What can be of more importance, than that they should be little, and mean, and base, and vile, in their

own eyes? For, otherwise, should they think themselves any thing, should they impute any thing to themselves, should they admit any thing of a pharisaic spirit, "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others:" nothing could more directly tend to overthrow the whole design. For, then, they would not only have all the world, but also God himself to contend with; seeing, he "resisteth the proud, and giveth grace" only "to the humble." Deeply conscious, therefore, should every member of this society be, of his own foolishness, weakness, helplessness: continually hanging, with his whole soul, upon Him, who alone hath wisdom and strength, with an unspeakable conviction, that "the help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself;" and that it is he alone who "worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

10. One point more. Whoever engages in this design, should have one thing deeply impressed on his heart, viz. that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let him, therefore, *learn of* him who was *meek*, as well as *lowly*. And let him abide in meekness, as well as humility: "With all lowliness and meekness," let him "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called." Let him be "gentle toward all men," good or bad, for his own sake, for their sake, for Christ's sake. Are any "ignorant, or out of the way?" Let him *have compassion* upon them. Do they even *oppose* the word and the work of God, yea, set themselves in battle array against it? So much the more hath he need, "in meekness to instruct those who thus oppose themselves," if haply they may "awake out of the snare of the devil," and no more be "taken captive at his will."

IV. 1. From the *qualifications* of those who are proper to engage in such an undertaking as this, I proceed to shew, Fourthly, With what *Spirit*, and in what *Manner*, it ought to be pursued. First, with what spirit. Now this first regards the *motive*, which is to be preserved in every step that is taken; for, *if* at any time "the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! But if thine

eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." This is, therefore, continually to be remembered, and carried into every word and action. Nothing is to be spoken or done, either great or small, with a view to any temporal advantage: nothing with a view to the favour or esteem, the love or the praise, of men. But the intention, the eye of the mind, is always to be fixed on the glory of God, and good of man.

2. But the spirit with which every thing is to be done, regards the *temper*, as well as the motive. And this is no other than that which has been described above. For the same courage, patience, steadiness, which qualify a man for the work, are to be exercised therein. *Above all*, let him *take the shield of faith:* this will quench a thousand fiery darts. Let him exert all the faith which God hath given him, in every trying hour. And let *all* his *doings be done in love:* never let this be wrested from him. Neither must *many* waters quench this love, nor the floods of ingratitude drown it. *Let*, likewise, that lowly *mind* be in him, which was also in Christ Jesus. Yea, and let him *be clothed with humility*, filling his heart, and adorning his whole behaviour. At the same time, let him "put on bowels of mercies, gentleness, long-suffering:" avoiding the least appearance of malice, bitterness, anger, or resentment; knowing it is our calling, not to be "overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good." In order to preserve this humble, gentle love, it is needful to do all things with *recollection* of spirit, *watching* against all *hurry*, or dissipation of thought, as well as against pride, wrath, or surliness. But this can be no otherwise preserved than by "continuing instant in prayer," both before and after he comes into the field, and during the whole action; and by doing all in the "spirit of sacrifice," offering all to God, through the Son of his Love.

3. As to the outward *manner* of acting, a general rule is, Let it be expressive of these inward tempers. But to be more particular: 1. Let every man beware, not to "do evil that good may come." Therefore, "putting away all lying, let every man speak the truth to his neighbour."

Use no fraud or guile, either in order to detect or to punish any man, but "by simplicity and godly sincerity commend yourself to men's consciences in the sight of God." It is probable that, by your adhering to these rules, fewer offenders will be convicted. But so much the more will the blessing of God accompany the whole undertaking.

4. But let innocence be joined with *Prudence*, properly so called. Not that offspring of hell, which *the world calls* Prudence, which is mere Craft, Cunning, Dissimulation: but with that *wisdom from above*, which our Lord peculiarly recommends to all, who would promote his kingdom upon earth. "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, while ye are harmless as doves." This wisdom will instruct you, how to suit your words and whole behaviour, to the persons with whom you have to do, at the time, place, and all other circumstances. It will teach you to cut off occasions of offence, even from those who seek occasion, and to do things of the most offensive nature, in the least offensive manner that is possible.

5. Your *manner of speaking*, particularly to offenders, should be at all times deeply *serious*, (lest it appear like insulting or triumphing over them,) rather inclining to *sad:* shewing that you pity them for what they do, and sympathize with them in what they suffer. Let your *air* and *tone* of voice, as well as words, be *dispassionate, calm, mild:* yea, where it would not appear like dissimulation, even *kind* and *friendly*. In some cases, where it will probably be received as it is meant, you may *profess* the *good-will* you bear them: but, at the same time, (that it may not be thought to proceed from fear, or any wrong inclination,) professing your *intrepidity*, and inflexible *resolution*, to oppose and punish vice to the uttermost.

V. 1. It remains only to make some Application of what has been said, partly to you who are already engaged in this work, partly to all that fear God, and more especially to them that love as well as fear him.

With regard to *you*, who are already engaged in this work, the first advice I would give you is, calmly and

deeply to consider the nature of your undertaking. Know what you are about; be thoroughly acquainted with what you have in hand. Consider the objections which are made to the whole of your undertaking; and, before you proceed, be satisfied that those objections have no real weight. Then may every man act as he is fully persuaded in his own mind.

2. I advise you, secondly, be not in haste to increase your number. And, in adding thereto, regard not wealth, rank, or any outward circumstance. Only regard the qualifications above described. Enquire diligently, whether the person proposed be of an *unblamable* carriage, and whether he be a man of *faith, courage, patience, steadiness!* Whether he be a *lover* of God and man? If so, he will add to your strength as well as number; if not, you will lose by him more than you gain, for you will displease God. And be not afraid to purge out from among you, any who do not answer the preceding character. By thus lessening your number, you will increase your strength: "you will be vessels meet for your Master's use."

3. I would, thirdly, advise you, narrowly to observe from what *motive* you at any time act or speak. Beware that your Intention be not stained with any regard, either to profit or praise. Whatever you do, "do it to the Lord," as the servants of Christ. Do not aim at pleasing yourself in any point, but pleasing him whose you are, and whom you serve. Let your eye be single, from first to last: eye God alone in every word and work.

4. I advise you, in the fourth place, see that you do every thing in a right *temper:* with lowliness and meekness, with patience and gentleness, worthy the gospel of Christ. Take every step, trusting in God, and in the most tender, loving spirit you are able. Mean time, *watch always*, against all hurry and dissipation of spirit, and *pray always* with all earnestness and perseverance, that your faith fail not. And let nothing interrupt that *spirit of sacrifice*, which you make of all you have and are, of all you suffer

choose it for thee, wilt thou murmur or complain? Wilt thou not rather say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" If you "suffer for Christ, happy are you: the Spirit of glory and of Christ shall rest upon you. Say not, "*I* would suffer all things, but my wife will not consent to it. And, certainly, a man ought to *leave father, and mother*, and all, *and cleave to his wife.*" True, all—but God; all—but Christ. But he ought not to leave *Him* for his wife. He is not to *leave any duty undone*, for the dearest relative. Our Lord himself hath said in this very sense, "If any man loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than me, he is not worthy of me!" Say not, "Well, I would forsake all for Christ: but one duty must not hinder another; and this would frequently hinder my attending Public Worship." Sometimes it probably would. "Go, then, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." And, whatever is lost by shewing this mercy, God will repay seven-fold into thy bosom. Say not, "But I shall hurt my own soul. I am a young man; and by taking up loose women I should expose myself to temptation." Yes, if you did this in your own strength, or for your own pleasure. But that is not the case. You trust in God; and you aim at pleasing him only. And if he should call you even into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, "though thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "True; if *he called me* into the furnace: but I do not see that I am called to this." Perhaps thou art not willing to see it. However, if thou wast not called before, I call thee *now*, in the name of Christ: take up thy cross, and follow him. Reason no more with flesh and blood, but now resolve to cast in thy lot, with the most despised, the most infamous, of his followers, the filth and off-scouring of the world. I call thee in particular, who didst once strengthen their hands, but since art drawn back. Take courage! Be strong! Fulfil their joy, by returning with heart and hand. Let it appear, thou "departedst for a season, that they might receive thee again for ever." O!

"be not disobedient to the heavenly calling!" And, as for all of you, who know whereunto ye are called, count ye all things loss, so ye may save one soul, for which Christ died. And therein "take no thought for the morrow," but "cast all your care on Him that careth for you." *Commit* your souls, bodies, substance, all, to Him, "as unto a merciful and faithful Creator."

The Form of a Donation by Will.

Item. I, *A. B.*, do hereby give and bequeath the sum of £.—— unto the Treasurer, for the time being, of a voluntary society, commonly called, or known by the name of *The Society for the Reformation of Manners*, (which Society doth usually meet in St. Martin's le Grand, near Newgate-Street, London,) the same to be paid within —— months after my decease, and to be applied to the uses and purposes of the said Society.

SERMON XLVI.

THE GOOD STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. 2.

"Give an Account of thy Stewardship: for thou canst be no longer Steward."

1. THE relation which man bears to God, the creature to his Creator, is exhibited to us in the Oracles of God under various representations. Considered as a sinner, a fallen creature, he is there represented as a *debtor* to his Creator. He is also frequently represented as a *servant*, which indeed is essential to him as a creature: insomuch that this appellation is given to the Son of God when in his state of humiliation: he "took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."

2. But no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than that of a *Steward*. Our blessed Lord frequently represents him as such; and there is a peculiar propriety in the representation. It is only in one particular respect, namely as he is a sinner, that he is stiled a *debtor*. And when he is stiled a *servant*, the appellation is general and indeterminate. But a *steward* is a servant of a particular kind: such a one as man is in all respects. This appellation is exactly expressive of his situation in the present world; specifying what kind of servant he is to God, and what kind of service his divine Master expects from him.

It may be of use, then, to consider this point throughly,

and to make our full improvement of it. In order to this, let us, First, enquire, in what respects we are now God's *Stewards*. Let us, Secondly, observe, that when he requires our souls of us, we *can be no longer stewards*. It will then only remain, as we may, in the Third place, observe, to "give an account of our stewardship."

I. 1. And, First, we are to enquire, in what respects we are now God's *stewards*. We are now indebted to him for all we have; but although a debtor is obliged to return what he has received, yet until the time of payment comes, he is at liberty to use it as he pleases. It is not so with a steward; he is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands, as *he* pleases, but as his Master pleases. He has no right to dispose of any thing which is in his hand, but according to the will of his Lord. For he is not the proprietor of any of these things, but barely entrusted with them by another: and entrusted on this express condition, that he shall dispose of all as his Master orders. Now this is exactly the case of every man, with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what he has lodged in our hands, as *we* please, but as he pleases, who alone is the possessor of heaven and earth, and the Lord of every creature. We have no right to dispose of any thing we have, but according to his will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things; they are all, as our Lord speaks, αλλοτρια, *belonging to another person;* nor is any thing properly *our own*, in the land of our pilgrimage. We shall not receive τα ιδια, *our own things*, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own: with all these temporal things we are barely entrusted by another; the Disposer and [illegible]ord of all. And he entrusts us with them on this exp[illegible]ndition, that we use them only as our Master's goods, [illegible] according to the particular directions which he has given us in his Word.

2. On this condition he hath entrusted us with our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received: but in order to impress this weighty truth on our hearts, it will be needful to come to particulars.

And, First, God has entrusted us with our *soul*, an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, together with all the

powers and faculties thereof, understanding, imagination, memory, will; and a train of affections, either included in it, or closely dependent upon it; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting present good and evil; desire and aversion, hope and fear, respecting that which is to come. All these St. Paul seems to include in two words, when he says "the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Perhaps indeed the latter word, νοηματα, might rather be rendered *thoughts:* provided we take that word in its most extensive sense, for every perception of the mind, whether active or passive.

4. Now, of all these, it is certain, we are only stewards. God has entrusted us with these powers and faculties, not that we may employ them according to our own wills, but according to the express orders which he has given us: (although it is true, that in doing his will, we most effectually secure our own happiness, seeing it is hereby only that we can be happy, either in time, or in eternity.) Thus, we are to use our understanding, our imagination, our memory, wholly to the glory of him that gave them. Thus our will is to be wholly given up to him, and all our affections to be regulated as he directs. We are to love and hate, to rejoice and grieve, to desire and shun, to hope and fear, according to the rule which he prescribes, whose we are, and whom we are to serve in all things. Even our thoughts are not our own in this sense; they are not at our own disposal: but for every deliberate motion of our minds, we are accountable to our Master.

4. God has, Secondly, intrusted us with our *bodies*, (those exquisitely wrought machines, so "fearfully and wonderfully made," with all the powers and members thereof. He has entrusted us with the organs of *sense*, of sight, hearing, and the rest: but none of these are given us as our own, to be employed according to our own will. None of these are *lent* us in such a sense, as to leave us at liberty to use them as we please for a season. No: we have received them on these very terms, that as long as they abide with us, we should employ them all, in that very manner, and no other, which he appoints.

5. It is on the same terms, that he has imparted to us that most excellent talent of *speech*. "Thou hast given me a tongue," says the ancient writer, "that I may praise thee therewith." For this purpose was it given to all the children of men, to be employed in glorifying God. Nothing, therefore, is more ungrateful, or more absurd, than to think or say, *our tongues are our own*. That cannot be, unless we have created ourselves, and so are independent on the Most High. Nay, but "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:" the manifest consequence is, That he is still *Lord over us*, in this as in all other respects. It follows, that there is not a word of our tongue, for which we are not accountable to him.

6. To him we are equally accountable for the use of our *hands* and *feet*, and all the *members* of our body. These are so many talents which are committed to our trust, until the time appointed by the Father. Until then, we have the use of all these; but as stewards, not as proprietors: to the end, we should "render them, not as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God."

7. God has intrusted us, Thirdly, with a portion of *worldly goods*, with food to eat, raiment to put on, and a place where to lay our head; with, not only the necessaries, but the conveniences of life. Above all, he has committed to our charge that precious talent, which contains all the rest, *money;* indeed it is unspeakably precious, if we are *wise and faithful stewards* of it; if we employ every part of it for such purposes as our blessed Lord has commanded us to do.

8. God has intrusted us, Fourthly, with several talents, which do not properly come under any of these heads: such is bodily *strength:* such are *health*, a pleasing *person*, an agreeable *address:* such are *learning* and *knowledge* in their various degrees, with all the other advantages of *education*. Such is the *influence* which we have over others, whether by their *love* and *esteem* of us, or by *power;* power to do them good or hurt, to help or hinder them in the circum-

stances of life. Add to these, that invaluable talent of *time*, with which God intrusts us from moment to moment. And, lastly, that on which all the rest depend, and without which they would all be curses, not blessings: namely, the *Grace* of God, the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight.

II. 1. In so many respects are the children of men, stewards of the Lord, *the Possessor of heaven and earth*. So large a portion of his goods, of various kinds, hath he committed to their charge. But it is not for ever, nor indeed for any considerable time. We have this trust reposed in us, only during the short, uncertain space that we sojourn here below: only so long as we remain on earth, as this fleeting breath is in our nostrils. The hour is swiftly approaching, it is just at hand, when we *can be no longer stewards*. The moment the body "returns to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it," we bear that character no more; the time of our stewardship is at an end. Part of those goods wherewith we were before intrusted, are now come to an end: at least, they are so with regard to *us*; nor are we any longer intrusted with them: and that part which remains, can no longer be employed or improved as it was before.

2. Part of what we were intrusted with before, is at an end, at least, with regard to us. What have we to do, after this life, with food, and raiment, and houses, and earthly possessions? The food of the dead is the dust of the earth: they are clothed only with worms and rottenness. They dwell in "the house prepared for all flesh:" their lands know them no more. All their worldly goods are delivered into other hands, and they have "no more portion under the sun."

3. The case is the same with regard to the *body*. The moment the spirit returns to God, we are no longer stewards of this machine, which is then sown in corruption and dishonour. All the parts and members of which it was composed, lie mouldering in the clay. The hands have no longer power to move; the feet have forgot their office; the

flesh, the sinews, the bones, are all hastening to be dissolved into common dust.

4. Here ends also the talents of a *mixed* nature, our *strength*, our *health*; our *beauty*, our *eloquence*, and *address*; our faculty of pleasing, of persuading, or convincing others. Here end likewise all the *honours* we once enjoyed, all the *power* which was lodged in our hands, all the *influence* which we once had over others, either by the love or the esteem which they bore us. "Our love, our hatred, our desire is perished:" none regard how we were once affected toward them. They look upon the dead as neither able to help nor hurt them; so that "a living dog is better than a dead lion."

5. Perhaps a doubt may remain concerning some of the other talents wherewith we are now intrusted, whether they will cease to exist when the body returns to dust, or only cease to be improvable. Indeed, there is no doubt, but the kind of *speech* which we now use, by means of these bodily organs, will then be entirely at an end, when those organs are destroyed. It is certain, the tongue will no more occasion any vibrations in the air: neither will the ear convey these tremulous motions to the common sensory. Even the *sonus exilis*, the low, shrill voice, which the poet supposes to belong to a separate spirit, we cannot allow to have a real being; it is a mere flight of imagination. Indeed, it cannot be questioned, but separate spirits have some way to communicate their sentiments to each other: but what inhabitant of flesh and blood can explain that way? What we term *speech*, they cannot have. So that we can no longer be stewards of this talent, when we are numbered with the dead.

6. It may likewise admit of a doubt, whether our *senses* will exist, when the organs of sense are destroyed. Is it not probable, that those of the lower kind will cease; the feeling, the smell, the taste, as they have a more immediate reference to the body, and are chiefly, if not wholly intended for the preservation of it? But will not some kind of *sight* remain, although the eye be closed in death? And

will there not be something in the soul, equivalent to the present sense of *hearing?* Nay, is it not probable, that these will not only exist in the separate state, but exist in a far greater degree, in a more eminent manner than now? When the soul, disentangled from its clay, is no longer "a dying spark in a cloudy place:" when it no longer "looks through the windows of the eye and ear?" But rather is all eye, all ear, all sense, in a manner we cannot yet conceive. And have we not a clear proof of the possibility of this, of seeing without the use of the eye, and hearing without the use of the ear? Yea, an earnest of it continually? For does not the soul see, in the clearest manner, when the eye is of no use, namely, in dreams? Does she not then enjoy the faculty of hearing, without any help from the ear? But however this be, certain it is, that neither will our *senses*, any more than our *speech*, be intrusted to us in the manner they are now, when the body lies in the silent grave.

7. How far the *knowledge or learning* which we have gained by *education*, will then remain, we cannot tell. Solomon indeed says, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." But it is evident, these words cannot be understood in an absolute sense. For it is so far from being true, that there is no *knowledge* after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then? Whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, that

"All these shadows which for things we take,
"Are but the empty dreams, which in death's sleep we make?"

Only excepting those things which God himself has been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one: after having sought for truth, with some diligence, for half a century, I am, at this day, hardly sure of any thing, but what I learn from the Bible. Nay, I positively affirm, I *know nothing*

else so certainly, that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it.

So much, however, we may learn from Solomon's words, *that there is no* such *knowledge* or *wisdom in the grave*, as will be of any use to an unhappy spirit; there *is no device* there, whereby he can then improve those talents, with which he was once intrusted. For *time* is no more: the time of our trial for everlasting happiness or misery is past. *One day*, the day of man, is over; *the day of salvation is ended.* Nothing now remains but the day of the Lord, ushering in, wide, unchangeable eternity.

8. But still, our souls, being incorruptible and immortal, of a nature "little lower than the angels," (even if we are to understand that phrase of our original nature, which may well admit of a doubt,) when our bodies are mouldered into earth, will remain with all their faculties. Our *memory*, our *understanding* will be so far from being destroyed, yea, or impaired by the dissolution of the body, that, on the contrary, we have reason to believe, they will be inconceivably strengthened. Have we not the clearest reason to believe, that they will then be wholly freed from those defects, which now naturally result from the union of the soul with the corruptible body? It is highly probable, that from the time these are disunited, our memory will let nothing slip: yea, that it will faithfully exhibit every thing to our view, which was ever committed to it. It is true, that the invisible world is, in Scripture, termed "the land of forgetfulness;" or, as it is still more strongly expressed in the old translation, "the land where all things are forgotten." They are forgotten; but by whom? Not by the inhabitants of that land, but by the inhabitants of the earth. It is with regard to them that the unseen world is *the land of forgetfulness.* *All things* therein *are* too frequently forgotten by these; but not by disembodied spirits. From the time they have put off the earthly tabernacle, we can hardly think they forget any thing.

9. In like manner, the *understanding* will, doubtless, be freed from the defects that are now inseparable from it. For

many ages, it has been an unquestioned maxim, *Humanum est errare et nescire:* ignorance and mistake are inseparable from human nature. But the whole of this assertion is only true, with regard to living men, and holds no longer, than while "the corruptible body presses down the soul." Ignorance, indeed, belongs to every finite understanding, seeing there is none beside God that knoweth all things; but not mistake. When the body is laid aside, this also is laid aside for ever.

10. What then can we say to an ingenious man, who has lately made a discovery, that disembodied spirits have not only no *senses*, (not even sight or hearing) but no *memory*, or *understanding*, no *thought*, or perception, not so much as a *consciousness* of their own existence? That they are in a dead sleep from death to the resurrection? *Consanguineus lethi sopor* indeed! Such a sleep we may call a near kinsman of death, if it be not the same thing. What can we say, but that ingenious men have strange dreams: and these they sometimes mistake for realities!

11. But to return: As the soul will retain its understanding and memory, notwithstanding the dissolution of the body, so undoubtedly the *Will*, including all the *affections*, will remain in its full vigour. If our love or anger, our hope or desire perish, it is only with regard to those whom we leave behind. To whom it matters not, whether they were the objects of our love or hate, of our desire or aversion. But in separate spirits themselves, we have no reason to believe, that any of these are extinguished. It is more probable, that they work with far greater force, than while the soul was clogged with flesh and blood.

12. But although all these, although both our knowledge and senses, our memory and understanding, together with our will, our love, hate, and all our affections, remain after the body is dropt off, yet, in this respect, they are as though they were not, we are no longer stewards of them. The things continue, but our stewardship does not: we no more act in that capacity. Even the *grace* which was formerly intrusted with us, in order to enable us to be faithful

and wise Stewards, is now no longer intrusted for that purpose. The days of our Stewardship are ended.

III. 1. It now remains, that being *no longer stewards*, we *give an Account of our Stewardship*. Some have imagined, this is to be done immediately after death, as soon as we enter into the world of spirits. Nay, the Church of Rome does absolutely assert this: yea, make it an article of faith. And thus much we may allow, the moment a soul drops the body, and stands naked before God, it cannot but know, what its portion will be to all eternity. It will have full in its view, either everlasting joy, or everlasting torment: as it is no longer possible to be deceived, in the judgment which we pass upon ourselves. But the Scripture gives us no reason to believe, that God will then sit in judgment upon us. There is no passage in all the Oracles of God, which affirms any such thing. That which has been frequently alleged for this purpose, seems rather to prove the contrary: namely, (Heb. ix. 27,) "It is appointed for men once to die, and after this, the judgment." For in all reason the word *once* is here applied, to judgment as well as death. So that the fair inference to be drawn from this very text, is, not that there are two judgments, a particular and a general; but that we are to be judged as well as to die, once only: not once immediately after death, and again after the general resurrection; but then only "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." The imagination therefore of one judgment at death, and another at the end of the world, can have no place with those, who make the written word of God, the whole and sole standard of their faith.

2. The time then when we are to give this account, is, when the "great white Throne comes down from heaven, and he that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens, and the earth, flee away, and there is found no place for them." It is then "the dead small and great, will stand before God: and the books will be opened;" the Book of Scripture, to them who were entrusted therewith, the Book of Conscience to all mankind. The *Book of Remembrance*, likewise, (to

use another scriptural expression,) which has been written from the foundation of the world, will then be laid open to the view of all the children of men. Before all these, even the whole human race, before the devil and his angels, before an innumerable company of holy angels, and before God the Judge of all: thou wilt appear, without any shelter or covering, without any possibility of disguise, to give a particular account of the manner wherein thou hast employed all thy Lord's goods.

3. The Judge of all will then enquire, "How didst thou employ thy *soul?* I intrusted thee with an immortal spirit, endowed with various powers and faculties, with understanding, imagination, memory, will, affections. I gave thee withal full and express directions, how all these were to be employed. Didst thou employ thy understanding, as far as it was capable, according to those directions, namely, in the knowledge of thyself and me? My nature, my attributes? My works, whether of creation, of providence, or of grace? In acquainting thyself with my Word? In using every mean to increase thy knowledge thereof? In meditating thereon day and night? Didst thou employ thy *memory* according to my Will? In treasuring up whatever knowledge thou hadst acquired, which might conduce to my glory, to thy own salvation, or the advantage of others? Didst thou store up therein, not things of no value, but whatever instruction thou hadst learned from my Word: and whatever experience thou hadst gained, of my Wisdom, Truth, Power, and Mercy? Was thy *imagination* employed, not in painting vain images, much less such as nourished *foolish and hurtful desires*, but in representing to thee whatever would profit thy soul, and awaken thy pursuit of wisdom and holiness? Didst thou follow my directions with regard to thy *will?* Was it wholly given up to me? Was it swallowed up in mine, so as never to oppose, but always run parallel with it? Were thy *affections* placed and regulated in such a manner, as I appointed in my Word? Didst thou give me thy heart? Didst thou not love the world, neither the things of the world? Was I the

object of thy love? Was all thy desire unto me, and unto the remembrance of my name? Was I the joy of thy heart, the delight of thy soul, the chief among ten thousand? Didst thou sorrow for nothing, but what grieved my Spirit? Didst thou fear and hate nothing but sin? Did the whole stream of thy affections flow back to the ocean from whence they came? Were thy *thoughts* employed according to my will? Not in ranging to the ends of the earth, not on folly, or sin; but on *whatsoever things were pure, whatsoever things were holy*, or, whatsoever was conducive to my *glory*, and to *peace and good-will among men?*"

4. Thy Lord will then enquire, "How didst thou employ the *body* wherewith I intrusted thee? I gave thee a *tongue*, to praise me therewith: Didst thou use it to the end for which it was given? Didst thou employ it, not in evil-speaking or idle-speaking, not in uncharitable or unprofitable conversation: but in such as was good, as was necessary or useful to thyself or others? Such as always tended, directly or indirectly, to *minister grace to the hearers?* I gave thee, together with thy other *senses*, those grand avenues of *sight and hearing*: were these employed to those excellent purpofes for which they were bestowed upon thee? In bringing thee in more and more instruction in righteousness and true holiness? I gave thee hands and feet, and various *members*, wherewith to perform the works which were prepared for thee: were they employed, not in doing *the will of the flesh*, of thy evil nature, or *the will of the mind*, (the things to which thy reason or fancy led thee,) but *the will of him that sent* thee into the world, merely to work out thy own salvation? Didst thou present all thy members, not to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness, but to me alone, through the Son of my love, *as instruments of righteousness?*"

The Lord of all will next enquire, "How didst thou employ the *worldly goods* which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve the body in health, in strength, and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use

apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine: studying not to please thyself, but me? Once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, *money*? Not in gratifying the desire of flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not squandering it away in vain expenses, the same as throwing it into the sea? Not hoarding it up to leave behind thee, the same as burying it in the earth? But first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family: then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it: looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose: leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? A father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as a mean of saving souls from death?"

6. Thy Lord will farther enquire, "Hast thou been a wise and faithful Steward, with regard to the talents of a mixt nature which I lent thee? Didst thou employ thy *health* and *strength*, not in folly or sin, not in the pleasures which perished in the using, 'not in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the desires thereof,' but in a vigorous pursuit of that better part which none could take away from thee? Didst thou employ whatever was pleasing in thy *person* or *address*, whatever advantages thou hadst by *education*, whatever share of *learning*, whatever *knowledge*, of things, or men, were committed to thee, for the promoting

of virtue in the world, for the enlargement of my kingdom? Didst thou employ whatever share of *power* thou hadst, whether *influence* over others, by the love or esteem of thee which they had conceived, for the increase of their wisdom and holiness? Didst thou employ that inestimable talent of *time*, with wariness and circumspection, as duly weighing the value of every moment, and knowing that all were numbered in eternity? Above all, wast thou a good Steward of my *grace*, preventing, accompanying, and following thee? Didst thou duly observe and carefully improve all the influences of my Spirit? Every good desire? Every measure of light? All his sharp words and gentle reproofs? How didst thou profit by "the spirit of bondage and fear," which was previous to "the Spirit of adoption?" And when thou wast made a partaker of his Spirit, crying in thy heart, "Abba, Father," didst thou stand fast in the glorious liberty wherewith I made thee free? Didst thou from thenceforth present thy soul and body, all thy thoughts, thy words, and actions, in one flame of love, as an holy sacrifice, glorifying me with thy body and thy spirit? Then "well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" And what will remain, either to the faithful or unfaithful Steward? Nothing but the execution of that sentence, which has been passed by the righteous Judge: fixing thee in a state which admits of no change, through everlasting ages. It remains only, that thou be rewarded to all eternity, according to thy works.

IV. 1. From these plain considerations we may learn, First, how important is this short, uncertain day of life! How precious above all utterance, above all conception, is every portion of it!

> "The least of these a serious care demands:
> For though they are little, they are golden sands!"

How deeply does it concern every child of man, to let none of these run to waste; but improve them all to the noblest purposes, as long as the breath of God is in his nostrils!

2. We learn from hence, Secondly, that there is no employment of our time, no action or conversation that is purely *indifferent*. All is good or bad, because all our time, as every thing we have, is *not our own*. All these are, as our Lord speaks, τα αλλοτρια, the property of another; of God, our Creator. Now these either are, or are not employed according to his will. If they are so employed, all is good; if they are not, all is evil. Again: it is his will, that we should continually grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, every thought, word, and work, whereby we grow in grace, is good: and every one whereby this knowledge is not increased, is truly and properly evil.

3. We learn from hence, Thirdly, that there are no works of supererogation; that we can never do more than our duty: seeing all we have is not our own, but God's; all we can do is due to him. We have not received this or that, or many things only, but every thing from him: therefore, every thing is his due. He that gives all, must needs have a right to all: So that if we pay him any thing less than all, we cannot be *faithful Stewards*. And considering *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own* labour, we cannot be *wise Stewards*, unless we labour to the uttermost of our power: not leaving any thing undone, which we possibly can do, but putting forth all our strength.

4. Brethren, "Who is an understanding man and endued with knowledge among you?" Let him shew the wisdom from above, by walking suitably to his character. If he so account of himself, as a Steward of the manifold gifts of God, let him see that all his thoughts, words, and works be agreeable to the post God has assigned him. It is no small thing, to lay out for God all which you have received from God. It requires all your wisdom, all your resolution, all your patience, and constancy: far more than ever you had by nature; but not more than you may have by grace. For his grace is sufficient for you; and "all things," you

know, "are possible to him that believeth." By faith then, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ:" "put on the whole armour of God," and you shall be enabled to glorify Him in all your words and works, yea, to bring every thought into the obedience of Christ.

Edinburgh,
May 15, 1768.

SERMON XLVII.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 24.

"Do I not fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord."

1. HOW strongly and beautifully do these words express the Omnipresence of God? And can there be, in the whole compass of nature, a more sublime subject? Can there be any, more worthy the consideration of every rational creature? Is there any more necessary to be considered, and to be understood,—so far as our poor faculties will admit? How many excellent purposes may it answer? What deep instruction may it convey to all the children of men? And more directly to the children of God?

2. How is it then, that so little has been written on so sublime and useful a subject? It is true that some of our most eminent writers have, occasionally touched upon it, and have several strong and beautiful reflections, which were naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise, or so much as a sermon upon the head? Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible, there may some such lie hid, in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid, even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same, for any use they are of, as if they had never been written.

3. What seems to be wanting still, for general use, is a plain discourse on the Omnipresence, or Ubiquity of God. First, in some manner explaining and proving that glorious truth, God is in this, and every place: and then applying it to the consciences of all thinking men, in a few practical inferences.

I. 1. Accordingly, I will endeavour, by the assistance of his Spirit, First, a little to explain the Omnipresence of God: to shew how we are to understand this glorious truth, God is in this, and every place. The Psalmist, you may remember, speaks strongly and beautifully upon it, in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm: observing, in the most exact order, First, God is in this place, and then, God is in every place. He observes, first, "Thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways, (ver. 2.) Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;" (ver. 4.) Although the *manner* thereof he could not explain: *how* it was, he could not tell. "Such knowledge," says he, "is too wonderful for me: I cannot attain unto it," (ver. 5.) He next observes, in the most lively and affecting manner, That God is in every place. "Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also." (ver. 6, 7.) If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other. "If I should take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand would lead me;" thy power and thy presence would be before me, "and thy right hand would hold me," seeing thou art equally in the length and breadth, and in the height and depth of the universe. Indeed, thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation, but

"Thine omnipresent sight,
Even to the pathless realms extends
Of uncreated night."

In a word, there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not.

2. Indeed, this subject is far too vast to be comprehended by the narrow limits of human understanding. We can only say, The great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as unbounded in his presence, as in his duration and power. In condescension, indeed, to our weak understanding, he is said, to *dwell in heaven:* but, strictly speaking, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but he is in every part of his dominion. The universal God dwelleth in universal space: so that we may say,

> "Hail, FATHER! whose creating call,
> Unnumber'd worlds attend!
> JEHOVAH, comprehending all,
> Whom none can comprehend!"

3. If we may dare attempt the illustrating this a little farther, what is the space occupied by a grain of sand, compared to that space which is occupied by the starry heavens? It is as a cypher: it is nothing: it vanishes away in the comparison. What is it then to the whole expanse of space, to which the whole creation is infinitely less than a grain of sand! And yet this space, to which the whole creation bears no proportion at all, is infinitely less in comparison of the great God, than a grain of sand, yea, a millionth part of it, is to that whole space.

II. 1. This seems to be the plain meaning of those solemn words, which God speaks of himself, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" And these sufficiently prove his Omnipresence; which may be farther proved from this consideration, God acts every where, and, therefore, is every where: for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which every thing would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing: by governing all, every moment superintending every thing that he has made; strongly and sweetly influ-

encing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures. The very Heathens acknowledged, that the great God governs the large and conspicuous parts of the universe; that he regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sun, moon, and stars: that he is

——— Vastem
Mens agitans molem, et toto se corpore miscens:

"——— The all-informing Soul,
That fills, pervades, and actuates the whole."

But they had no conception of his having a regard to the least things as well as the greatest: of his presiding over all that he has made, and governing atoms as well as worlds. This we could not have known, unless it had pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our Father which is in heaven:" and much less affirm, that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered!"

2. This comfortable truth, that "God filleth heaven and earth," we learn also from the Psalmist above recited. "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand shall lead me." The plain meaning is, *If I* remove to any distance whatever, thou art there, thou still besettest me, and layest thine hand upon me. Let me flee to any conceivable or inconceivable distance, above, beneath, or on any side, it makes no difference; thou art still equally there: in thee I still "live, and move, and have my being."

3. And where no creature is, still God is there. The presence or absence of any or all creatures, makes no difference with regard to him. He is equally in all, or without all. Many have been the disputes among philosophers, whether there be any such thing as empty space in the universe. And it is now generally supposed, that all space

is full. Perhaps it cannot be poved, that all space is filled with matter. But the Heathen himself will bear us witness, *Jovis omnia plena*, "All things are full of God." Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation, (for creation must have bounds, seeing nothing is boundless, nothing can be, but the great Creator,) even that space cannot exclude him who fills the heaven and the earth.

5. Just equivalent to this is the expression of the Apostle, Eph. ii. 23, (not as some have strangely supposed, concerning the church, but concerning the Head of it,) "The fulness of him that filleth all in all:" τα παντα εν πασιν, literally translated, *all things in all things;* the strongest expression of universality which can possibly be conceived. It necessarily includes the last and the greatest of all things that exist. So that if any expression could be stronger, it would be stronger than even that, the *filling heaven and earth.*

5. Indeed, this very expression, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (the question being equal to the strongest affirmation,) implies the clearest assertion of God's being present every where, and filling all space. For it is well known the Hebrew phrase, *heaven and earth*, includes the whole universe, the whole extent of space, created or uncreated, and all that is therein.

6. Nay, and we cannot believe the Omnipotence of God, unless we believe his Omnipresence. For seeing, as we observed before, nothing can act where it is not; if there were any space where God was not present, he would not be able to do any thing there. Therefore, to deny the Omnipresence of God, implies, likewise, the denial of his Omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is, undoubtedly, to set bounds to the other also.

7. Indeed, wherever we suppose him not to be, there we suppose all his attributes to be in vain. He cannot exercise there, either his justice, or mercy, either his power, or wisdom. In this extra-mundane space, (so to speak,) where we suppose God not to be present, we must, of course, suppose him to have no dominion; but, as it is supposed to

be beyond the bounds of the creation, so it is beyond the bounds of the Creator's power. Such is the blasphemous absurdity, which is implied in this supposition.

8. But to all that is or can be said, of the Omnipresence of God, the world has one grand objection: they cannot see him. And this is really at the root of all their other objections. This our blessed Lord observed long ago: "Whom the world cannot receive, because they see him not." But is it not easy to reply, "Can you see the wind? You cannot. But do you, therefore, deny its existence, or its presence?" You say, No: for I can perceive it by my other senses. "But, by which of your senses do you perceive your soul? Surely, you do not deny either the existence or the presence of this! And yet it is not the object of your sight, or of any of your other senses. Suffice it then to consider, That God is a Spirit, as is your soul also. Consequently, "him no man hath seen, or can see," with eyes of flesh and blood.

III. 1. But allowing that God is here, as in every place, that he is "about our bed, and about our path," that he "besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us:" what inference should we draw from hence? What use should we make of this awful consideration? Is it not meet and right, to humble ourselves before the eyes of his Majesty? Should we not labour continually to acknowledge his presence, "with reverence and godly fear?" Not, indeed, with the fear of devils, that believe and tremble, but with the fear of angels, with something similar to that which is felt by the inhabitants of heaven, when

"Dark with excessive bright his skirts appear,
Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

2. Secondly, If you believe, that God is about your bed, and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him. Suppose that a messenger

of God, an angel, were now standing at your right hand, and fixing his eyes upon you, would you not take care to abstain from every word or action, that you knew would offend him? Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow-servants, suppose only a holy man stood by you, would you not be extremely cautious how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be, when you know, that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy One, "that inhabiteth Eternity," is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, every moment? And that he himself will surely bring you into judgment, for all you think, and speak, and act, under the sun!

3. In particular: If there is not a word in your tongue, not a syllable you speak, but he "knoweth it altogether;" how exact should you be in "setting a watch before your mouth, and in keeping the door of your lips!" How wary does it behove you to be in all your conversation, being forewarned by your Judge, that, "By your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned!" How cautious, lest "any corrupt communication," any uncharitable, yea, or unprofitable discourse, should proceed out of your mouth:" instead of "that which is good to the use of edifying, and meet to minister grace to the hearers!"

4. Yea, if God sees our hearts, as well as our hands, and in all places; if he understandeth our thoughts long before they are clothed with words; how earnestly should we urge that petition, "Search me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart: look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" How needful is it to work together with him, in "keeping our hearts with all diligence," till he hath "cast down imaginations, evil reasonings, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

5. On the other hand, if you are already listed under the great Captain of your salvation, seeing you are continually under the eye of your Captain, how zealous and active

should you be, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life! to endure hardships, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to use all diligence, to *war a good warfare*, and to do whatever is acceptable in his sight! How studious should you be to approve all your ways to his all-seeing eyes, that he may say to your hearts, what he will proclaim aloud in the great assembly of men and angels, "Well done! good and faithful servants."

6. In order to attain these glorious ends, spare no pains to preserve always, a deep, a continual, a lively, and a joyful sense of his gracious presence. Never forget his comprehensive word to the great Father of the Faithful, "I am the Almighty" (rather, the *All-sufficient)* God, walk before me, and be thou perfect!" Cheerfully expect, that he, before whom you stand, will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, will keep you from all evil; and, when you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, will stablish, strengthen, and settle you: and then preserve you unblamable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Portsmouth, Aug. 12, 1788.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE XVI. 31.

"If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead."

1. HOW strange a paradox is this! How contrary to the common apprehension of man! Who is so confirmed in unbelief, as not to think, "If one came to me from the dead, I should be effectually persuaded to repent?" But this passage affords us a more strange saying, (ver. 14,) "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "No! Why not? Why cannot we serve both?" will a true servant of Mammon say. Accordingly, the Pharisees, who supposed they served God, and did cordially serve Mammon, *derided him*: εξεμυκτηριζον; a word expressive of the deepest contempt. But he said, (ver. 15,) "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: and that which is highly esteemed among men, is [very commonly] an abomination before God:" a terrible proof of which our Lord subjoins in the remaining part of the chapter.

2. But is the subsequent account merely a parable, or a real history? It has been believed by many, and roundly asserted, to be a mere parable: because of one or two cir-

cumstances therein, which are not easy to be accounted for. In particular, it is hard to conceive, how a person in Hell could hold conversation with one in Paradise. But, admitting we cannot account for this, will it overbalance an express assertion of our Lord, "There was," says our Lord, "a certain rich man."—Was there not? Did such a man never exist? "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus."—Was there, or was there not? Is it not bold enough, positively to deny, what our blessed Lord positively affirms? Therefore, we cannot reasonably doubt, but the whole narration, with all its circumstances, is exactly true. And Theophylact, (one of the ancient commentators on the Scriptures,) observes upon the text, "That, according to the tradition of the Jews, Lazarus lived at Jerusalem."

I propose, with God's assistance, First, to explain this history: Secondly, to apply it: and, Thirdly, to prove the truth of that weighty sentence with which it is concluded; namely, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

I. 1. And, first, I will endeavour, with God's assistance, to explain this history. "There was a certain rich man." And, doubtless, on that very account, highly esteemed among men. "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen:"—And, consequently, esteemed the more highly, both as appearing suitably to his fortune, and as an encourager of trade; "And fared sumptuously every day." Here was another reason for his being *highly esteemed* for hospitality and generosity by those who frequently sat at his table, and the tradesmen that furnished it.

2. "And there was a certain beggar," one in the lowest line of human infamy, "named Lazarus," according to the Greek termination; in Hebrew, Eleazar. From this name we may gather that he was of no mean family, although this branch of it was, at present, so reduced. It is probable, he was well known in the city: and it was no scandal to him to be named.—"Who was laid at his gate," although no pleasing spectacle, so that one might wonder he was suffered to lie there; "full of sores," of running ulcers: "and

desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. So the complicated affliction, of poverty, pain, and want of bread, lay upon him at once! But it does not appear that any creature took the least notice of the despicable wretch! Only "the dogs came and licked his sores." All the comfort which this world afforded him!

3. But see the change! "The beggar died:"—Here ended poverty and pain; "and was carried by angels:"—nobler servants than any that attended the rich man:—"into Abraham's bosom:" So the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord stiles Paradise: the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest:" the receptacle of holy souls, from death to the resurrection." It is, indeed, very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven: but this opinion has not the least foundation in the Oracles of God: on the contrary, our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father," in heaven. But he had been in Paradise, according to his promise to the penitent thief; "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Hence, it is plain, that Paradise is not heaven. It is, indeed, (if we may be allowed the expression,) the anti-chamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain, till, after the General Judgment, they are received into glory.

4. But see, the scene changes again! "The rich man also died:"—What! must rich men also die? Must they fall "like one of the people?" Is there no help? A rich man in London, some years ago, when the physician told him, "He must die," gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist; and cried out vehemently, "God, God, I won't die!" But he died with the very words in his mouth! "And was buried:"—Doubtless, with pomp enough, suitable to his quality: although we do not find that there was then in all the world, that exquisite instance of human folly, that senseless, cruel mockery of a poor putrifying carcase, what we term *lying in state.*

5. "And, in hell he lifted up his eyes:"—O, what a change! How is the mighty fallen! But the word which is here rendered *hell*, does not always mean, the place of the damned. It is, literally, *The invisible world*, and is of very wide extent, including the receptacle of separate spirits, whether good or bad. But here it evidently means, that region of Hades, where the souls of wicked men reside, as appears from the following words, "being in torments:"—in order, say some, "to atone for the sins committed while in the body, as well as to purify the soul from all its inherent sin." Just so, the eminent heathen poet, near two thousand years ago:

"Necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris,
Ergo exercentur pænis.——
Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni."

See the near resemblance between the ancient and the modern Purgatory! Only in the ancient, the heathen Purgatory, both fire, water, and air, were employed in expiating sin, and purifying the soul: whereas, in the mystic Purgatory, fire alone is supposed sufficient, both to purge and expiate! Vain hope! No suffering, but that of Christ, has any power to expiate sin: and no fire, but that of love, can purify the soul, either in time, or in eternity.

6. "He seeth Abraham afar off."—Far, indeed! As far as from Hell to Paradise. Perhaps, "ten-fold the length of this terrene." But how could this be? I cannot tell: but it is by no means incredible. For who knows, how "far an angel kens?" Or a spirit, divested of flesh and blood?"—"And Lazarus in his bosom." It is well known, that in the ancient feasts, among the Jews as well as the Romans, the guests did not sit down at the table, as is now the custom to do, but lay on couches, each having a pillow at his left side, on which he supported his elbow; and he that sat next him, on the right side, was said *to lie in his bosom*.

It was in this sense that the Apostle John lay in his *Master's bosom*. Accordingly the expression of Lazarus lying in *Abraham's bosom*, implies, that he was in the highest place of honour and happiness.

7. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me."—Thou fool, what can Abraham do? What can any creature, yea, all the creation do, to break the bars of the bottomless pit? Whoever would escape from the place of torment, let him cry to God, the Father of mercy! Nay, but the time is past! Justice now takes place, and rejoices over mercy!—"And send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame!" How exceedingly modest a request is this! He does not say, That he may take me out of this flame. He does not ask, That he may bring me a cup of water, or as much as he might hold in the palm of his hand. But barely, "That he may dip, (were it but) the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." No! It cannot be! No mercy can enter within the shades of hell!

8. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things, and, likewise, Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Perhaps these words may supply us with an answer to an important question; How came this *rich man* to be in hell? It does not appear that he was a wicked man, in the common sense of the word: that he was a drunkard, a common swearer, a sabbath-breaker, or that he lived in any known sin. It is probable he was a Pharisee, and, as such, was, in all the outward parts of religion, blameless. How then did he come into the *place of torments?* If there were no other reason to be assigned, there is a sufficient one implied in those words: ("He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!") "Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things:"—the things, which thou hadst chosen for thy happiness. Thou hadst set thy affection on things beneath. And thou hadst thy reward. Thou didst receive the portion which thou hadst chosen, and canst have

no portion above. "And, likewise, Lazarus evil things."—Not *his* evil things; for he did not choose them. But they were chosen for him by the wise Providence of God: and now "he is comforted, while thou art tormented."

9. "But, beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed."—A great chasm, a vast vacuity. Can any tell us, what this is? What is the nature, what are the bounds of it? Nay, none of the children of men: none but an inhabitant of the invisible world. "So that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Undoubtedly, a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God determining that none should go across that gulf, is a bound which no creature can pass.

10. Then he said, "I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment," ver. 27, 28. Two entirely different motives have been assigned for this extraordinary request. Some ascribe it wholly to self-love, to a fear of the bitter reproaches, which he might easily suppose, his brethren would pour upon him, if, in consequence of his example, and perhaps advice, they came to the same place of torment. Others have imputed it to a nobler motive. They suppose, as the misery of the wicked will not be complete till the day of judgment, so neither will their wickedness. Consequently they believe, that, till that time, they may retain some sparks of natural affection. And they, not improbably, imagine, that this might have occasioned his desire to prevent their sharing his own torment.

11. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them, ver. 29. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." Who would not be of the same opinion? Might not any one reasonably suppose, that a message, solemnly delivered by one that came from the dead, must have an irresistible force? Who would not

think, I myself could not possibly withstand such a preacher of repentance?

II. This, I conceive to be the meaning of the words. I will now endeavour, with the help of God, to apply them. And I beseech you, brethren, while I am doing this, to suffer the word of exhortation. The more closely these things are applied to your souls, the more ye may profit thereby.

1. "There was a certain rich man." And it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression. Therefore, I remind all of you that are of this number, that have the conveniences of life, and something over, that ye walk upon slippery ground. Ye continually tread on snares and deaths. Ye are, every moment, on the verge of hell. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen." And some may have a plea for this: our Lord mentions them that *dwell in kings' houses*, as wearing *gorgeous*, that is splendid *apparel*, and does not blame them for it. But certainly this is no plea, for any that do not dwell in kings' houses. Let all of them, therefore, beware how they follow his example, who is *lifting up his eyes in hell:* let us follow the advice of the Apostle, being "adorned with good works, and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

2. "He fared sumptuously every day." Reconcile this with religion who can. I know how plausibly the prophets of smooth things can talk, in favour of hospitality, of making our friends welcome, of keeping an handsome table, to do honour to religion, of promoting trade, and the like. But God is not mocked: He will not be put off with such pretences as these. Whoever thou art that sharest in the sin of this rich man, were it no other than *faring sumptuously every day*, thou shalt as surely be a sharer in his punishment, except thou repent, as if thou wert already crying for a drop of water to cool thy tongue.

3. "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be

fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table," ver. 20, 21. But it seems both the rich man and his guests were too *religious* to relieve *common beggars*. A sin of which pious Mr. H. earnestly warns his Readers; and an admonition to the same kind, I have read on the gate of the good city of Winchester! I wish the gentleman who placed it there had seen a little circumstance which occurred some years since. At Epworth in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the Market-place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying, "She was very hungry." The master bid her be gone, for a lazy jade. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying, "She was very thirsty." She had much the same answer. At a third door she begged a little water, saying, "She was very faint." But this man also was too conscientious to encourage *common beggars*. The boys, seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow-balls. She looked up, lay down, and died! Would you wish to be the man, who refused that poor wretch a morsel of bread, or a cup of water? "Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores:" being more compassionate than their Master. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Hear this, all ye that are poor in this world. Ye that, many times, have not food to eat, or raiment to put on: ye that have not a place where to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar! Ye are now reduced to "solicit the cold hand of charity." Yet lift up your head; it shall not always be thus. I love you, I pity you, I admire you, when, "in patience, ye possess your souls." Yet I cannot help you. But there is one that can, the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow. "The Poor crieth unto the Lord, and he heareth him, and delivereth him out of his troubles." Yet a little while, if ye truly turn to him, his angels shall carry you into Abraham's bosom. There ye shall "hunger no more, and thirst no more:" ye shall feel no more sorrow or pain; but "the

Lamb shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and lead you forth beside fountains of living waters."

4. But see, the scene is changed. "The rich man also died." What! in spite of his riches? Probably sooner than he desired. For how just is that word, "O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in the midst of his possessions?" However if that would be a comfort, *he was buried.* But how little did it signify whether he was laid under a lofty monument, or among

> "Graves, with bending osiers crown'd,
> Where numbers heav'd the crumbled ground?"

And what followed? "In hell he lifted his eyes." This it is certain, Ye need not do. God does not require it of you; "He willeth not that any should perish." Ye cannot, unless by your own wilful choice, intruding into those regions of woe, which God did not prepare for *you*, but for the *devil and his angels.*

5. See the scene change again! "He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." And he knew him: although, perhaps, he had only cast a glance at him, while he "lay at his gates." Are any of you in doubt, whether we shall know one another in the other world? Here your doubt may receive a full solution. If a soul in hell knew Lazarus in Paradise, as *far off* as he was, certainly, those that are together in Paradise, will perfectly know each other.

6. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me!" I do not remember in all the Bible, any prayer made to a saint, but this. And if we observe, who made it, a man in hell, and with what success, we shall hardly wish to follow the precedent. O let us cry for mercy to God, not to man! And it is our wisdom to cry now, while we are in the land of mercy; otherwise it will be too late! "I am tormented in this flame!" Tormented! observe, not purified. Vain hope, that fire can purify a spirit! As well might you expect water to cleanse the

soul, as fire. God forbid that you or I should make the trial!

7. And "Abraham said, Son, remember:"—Mark, how Abraham accosts a damned spirit: and shall we behave with less tenderness to any of the children of God, "because they are not of our opinion?" "Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things." O, beware it be not your case! Are not the things of the world thy good things? The chief objects of thy desire and pursuit? Are they not thy chief joy? If so, thou art in a very dangerous state, in the very condition which Dives was in upon earth! Do not then dream, that all is well, because thou art "highly esteemed among men:" because thou dost no harm; or dost much good; or attendest all the ordinances of God. What is all this, if thy soul cleave to the dust? If thy heart be in the world: if thou love the creature more than the Creator.

8. How striking are the next words! "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from us to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." This was the text which occasioned the Epitaph on a right honourable infidel and gamester:

> "Here lies a Dicer; long in doubt
> If death could kill the soul, or not?
> Here ends his doubtfulness; at last
> Convinc'd;—but, ah! the die is cast!"

But blessed be God, *your* die is not cast yet. You are not passed the great gulf, but have it still in your power to choose whether you will be attended by angels or fiends, when your soul quits its earthly mansion. Now stretch out your hand to eternal life, or eternal death! And God says, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt!"

9. Being repulsed in this, he makes another request: "I pray thee, send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them."—It is not impossible that other unhappy spirits may wish [illegible] to this

relations they have left behind them. But this is the accepted time for them, as well as for us. Let us, then, address them ourselves: and let us beg our living friends to give us all the help they can, without waiting for assistance from the inhabitants of another world. Let us earnestly exhort them to use the helps they have; to "hear Moses and the Prophets." We are, indeed, apt to think, like that unhappy spirit, "If one went to them from the dead, they will repent. But Abraham said, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

III. I am, in the third place, to prove the truth of this weighty sentence, which I will do, first, briefly, and then more at large.

And, First, to express the matter briefly: It is certain, that no human spirit, while it is in the body, can *persuade* another *to repent;* can work in him an entire change, both of heart and life; a change, from universal wickedness, to universal holiness. And, suppose that spirit discharged from the body, it is no more able to do this, than it was before: no power less than that which created it at first, can create any soul anew. No angel, much less any human spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, can bring one soul from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. It might very possibly fright him to death, or to the belief of any speculative truth; but it could not fright him into spiritual life. God alone can raise those that are "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. In order to prove more at large, that if men "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be [effectually] persuaded to repent, though one rose from the dead:" I will propose a case of this kind, with all the advantages that can be conceived. Suppose, then, one that does not "hear Moses and the prophets," that does not believe the Scripture to be of God, to be fast asleep in his bed, and suddenly to awake, while the clock was striking one. He is surprised to observe the chamber as light as if it were noon-day. He looks up, and sees one whom he perfectly

knew, standing at his bed-side. Though a little surprised at first, he quickly recollects himself, and has the courage to ask, "Are not you my friend, who died at such a time?" He answers, "I am. I am come from God, with a message to *you*. You have often wished you could see one risen from the dead, and said, then you *would* repent. You have your wish: and I am ordered to inform you, you are seeking death in the error of your life. If you die in the state you are in now, you will die eternally. I warn you in his name, That the Scriptures are the real Word of God. That, from the moment you die, you will be remarkably happy, or unspeakably miserable. That you cannot be happy hereafter, unless you are holy here, which cannot be, unless you are born again. Receive this call from God! Eternity is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel!" Having spoken these words, he vanishes away, and the room is dark as it was before.

3. One may easily believe it would be impossible for him not to be convinced for the present. He would sleep no more that night, and would, as soon as possible, tell his family what he had seen and heard. Not content with this, he would be impatient to tell it to his former companions. And, probably, observing the earnestness with which he spoke, they would not then contradict him. They would say to each other, "Give him time to cool; then he will be a reasonable man again."

4. Now it is constantly found, that impressions made on the memory gradually decay: that they grow weaker and weaker in process of time, and the traces of them fainter and fainter. So it must be in this case, which his companions observing, would not fail to seize the opportunity. They would speak to this effect: "It was a strange account you gave us some time since: the more so, because we know *you* to be a sensible man, and not inclined to Enthusiasm. But, perhaps, you have not fully considered, how difficult it is, in some cases, to distinguish our dreams from our waking thoughts. Has any one yet been able to

find out an infallible criterion between them? Is it not, then, possible, that you may have been asleep, when this lively impression was made on your mind?" When he had been brought to think, *possibly* it might be a dream, they would soon persuade him, *probably* it was so: and not long after, to believe, it *certainly* was a dream. So little would it avail, that one came from the dead!

5. It could not be expected to be otherwise. For what was the effect which was wrought upon him? 1. He was exceedingly frightened. 2. This fright made way for a deeper conviction of the truth then declared. But, 3. His heart was not changed. None but the Almighty could effect this. Therefore, the bias of his soul was still set the wrong way: he still loved the world, and, consequently, wished that the Scripture was not true. How easily, then, as the fright wore off, would he again believe what he wished! The conclusion, then, is plain and undeniable. If men "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded to repent and believe the gospel, though one rose from the dead."

6. We may add one consideration more, which brings the matter to a full issue. Before, or about the same time, that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, another Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was actually raised from the dead. But were even those who believed the fact, persuaded to repent? So far from it, that "they took counsel, to kill Lazarus," as well as his Master! Away, then, with the fond imagination, that those who "hear not Moses and the Prophets, would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

7. From the whole we may draw that general conclusion, That standing Revelation is the best mean of rational conviction: far preferable to any of those extraordinary means which some imagine would be more effectual. It is, therefore, our wisdom, to avail ourselves of this; to make full use of it, so that it may be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths. Let us take care, that our whole heart

and life be conformable thereto; that it be the constant rule of all our tempers, all our words, and all our actions. So shall we preserve in all things the testimony of a good conscience toward God: and when our course is finished, we too shall be "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

Birmingham,
March 25, 1788.

SERMON XLIX.

ON THE WILDERNESS STATE.

JOHN xvi. 22.

"*Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*"

1. AFTER God had wrought a great deliverance for Israel, by bringing them out of the house of bondage, they did not immediately enter into the land which he had promised to their fathers, but "wandered out of the way in the wilderness," and were variously tempted and distressed. In like manner, after God has delivered them that fear him from the bondage of sin and Satan; after they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus," yet, not many of them immediately enter into *the rest* which *remaineth for the people of God.* The greater part of them wander, more or less, out of the good way into which he hath brought them. They come, as it were, into a *waste and howling desart*, where they are variously tempted and tormented. And this, some, in allusion to the case of the Israelites, have termed, *A Wilderness State.*

2. Certain it is, that the condition wherein these are, has a right to the tenderest compassion. They labour under an evil and sore disease; though one that is not commonly

understood: and for this very reason it is the more difficult for them to find a remedy. Being in darkness themselves, they cannot be supposed to understand the nature of their own disorder. And few of their brethren, nay, perhaps, of their teachers, know either what their sickness is, or how to heal it. So much the more need there is to enquire, First, What is the Nature of the disease? Secondly, What is the Cause? and, Thirdly, What is the Cure of it?

I. And, first, What is the nature of this disease, into which so many fall, after they have believed? Wherein does it properly consist? And what are the genuine symptoms of it? It properly consists in the loss of that faith, which God once wrought in their hearts. They that are *in the wilderness*, have not now that divine *evidence*, that satisfactory "conviction of things not seen," which they once enjoyed. They have not now that inward demonstration of the Spirit, which before enabled each of them to say, "The life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The light of heaven does not now "shine in their hearts," neither do they "see him that is invisible:" but darkness is again on the face of their souls, and blindness on the face of their understanding. The Spirit no longer "witnesses with their spirits, that they are the children of God;" neither does he continue, as the Spirit of Adoption, "crying in their hearts, Abba, Father." They have not now a sure trust in his love, and a liberty of approaching him with holy boldness. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is no more the language of their heart; but they are shorn of their strength, and become weak and feeble-minded, even as other men.

2. Hence, Secondly, proceeds the loss of love, which cannot but rise or fall, at the same time, and in the same proportion, with true, living faith. Accordingly, they that are deprived of their faith, are deprived of the love of God also. They cannot now say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." They are not now happy in God, as every one is that truly loves him. They

do not delight in him as in time past, and "smell the odour of his ointments." Once, all their "desire was unto him, and to the remembrance of his Name." But, now, even their desires are cold and dead, if not utterly extinguished. And as their love of God is waxed cold, so is also their love of their neighbour. They have not now that zeal for the souls of men, that longing after their welfare, that fervent, restless, active desire of their being reconciled to God. They do not feel those "bowels of mercies" for the sheep that are lost, that tender "compassion for the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." Once they were "gentle toward all men," meekly *instructing* such as *opposed* the truth, and, "if any were overtaken in a fault, restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness." But, after a suspense, perhaps, of many days, anger begins to regain its power. Yea, peevishness and impatience thrust sore at them, that they may fall. And it is well if they are not sometimes driven, even to "render evil for evil, and railing for railing."

3. In consequence of the loss of faith and love, follows, Thirdly, Loss of joy in the Holy Ghost. For, if the loving consciousness of pardon be no more, the joy resulting therefrom cannot remain. If the Spirit do not witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, the joy that flowed from the inward witness, must also be at an end. And in like manner, they who once "rejoiced with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God," now they are deprived of that "hope full of immortality," are deprived of the joy it occasioned: as also of that which resulted from a consciousness of "the love of God," then "shed abroad in their hearts." For the cause being removed, so is the effect: the fountain being dammed up, those living waters spring no more, to refresh the thirsty soul.

4. With loss of faith, and love, and joy, there is also joined, Fourthly, The loss of that peace, which once passed all understanding. That sweet tranquillity of mind, that composure of spirit, is gone. Painful doubt returns: doubt, whether we ever did, and, perhaps, whether we ever shall

believe. We begin to doubt, whether we ever did find in our hearts the real testimony of the Spirit? Whether we did not rather deceive our own souls, and mistake the voice of nature for the voice of God? Nay, and perhaps, whether we shall ever hear his voice, and find favour in his sight. And these doubts are again joined with servile fear, with that *fear* which *hath torment.* We fear the wrath of God, even as before we believed: we fear, lest we should be cast out of his presence; and thence sink again into that fear of death, from which we were before wholly delivered.

5. But even this is not all: for loss of peace is accompanied with loss of power. We know, every one who has peace with God, through Jesus Christ, has power over all sin. But whenever he loses the peace of God, he loses also the power over sin. While that peace remained, power also remained, even over the besetting sin; whether it were the sin of his nature, his constitution, the sin of his education, or that of his profession: yea, and over those evil tempers and desires, which, till then, he could not conquer. *Sin* had then *no more dominion over him:* but he hath now no more dominion over sin. He may struggle, indeed, but he cannot overcome; the crown is fallen from his head. His enemies again prevail over him, and more or less bring him into bondage. The glory is departed from him, even the kingdom of God which was in his heart. He is dispossessed of righteousness, as well as of peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.

II. 1. Such is the nature of what many have termed, and not improperly, *The Wilderness State.* But the nature of it may be more fully understood by enquiring, Secondly, What are the causes of it? These, indeed, are various. But I dare not rank among those, the bare, arbitrary, sovereign Will of God. He "rejoiceth in the prosperity of his servants: he delighteth not to afflict or grieve the children of men." His invariable Will is our sanctification, attended with "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are his own free gifts: and we are assured "the gifts of God are," on his part, "without repentance." He never repenteth of

what he hath given, or desires to withdraw them from us. Therefore, he never *deserts* us, as some speak: it is we only that *desert* him.

2. The most usual cause of inward darkness is sin of one kind or other. This it is which generally occasions what is often a complication of sin and misery. And, First, Sin of commission. This may frequently be observed to darken the soul in a moment; especially, if it be a known, a wilful, or presumptuous sin. If, for instance, a person who is now walking in the clear light of God's countenance, should be any way prevailed on to commit a single act of drunkenness, or uncleanness, it would be no wonder, if, in that very hour, he fell into utter darkness. It is true, there have been some very rare cases, wherein God has prevented this, by an extraordinary display of his pardoning mercy, almost in the very instant. But in general, such an abuse of the goodness of God, so gross an insult on his love, occasions an immediate estrangement from God, and a "darkness that may be felt."

3. But it may be hoped, this case is not very frequent. That there are not many, who so despise the riches of his goodness, as while they walk in his light, so grossly, and presumptuously to rebel against him. That light is much more frequently lost, by giving way to sins of omission. This, indeed, does not immediately quench the Spirit, but gradually and slowly. The former may be compared to pouring water upon a fire; the latter to withdrawing the fuel from it. And many times will that loving Spirit reprove our neglect, before he departs from us. Many are the inward checks, the secret notices he gives, before his influences are withdrawn. So that only a train of omissions, wilfully persisted in, can bring us into utter darkness.

4. Perhaps no sin of omission more frequently occasions this, than the neglect of private prayer; the want whereof cannot be supplied by any other ordinance whatever. Nothing can be more plain, than that the life of God in the soul does not continue, much less increase, unless we use all opportunities of communion with God, and pouring out our

hearts before him. If, therefore, we are negligent of this, if we suffer business, company, or any avocation whatever, to prevent these secret exercises of the soul, (or, which comes to the same thing, to make us hurry them over in a slight and careless manner,) that life will surely decay. And if we long or frequently intermit them, it will gradually die away.

5. Another sin of omission, which frequently brings the soul of a believer into darkness, is the neglect of what was so strongly enjoined, even under the Jewish dispensation, "Thou shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." Now if we do *hate our brother in our heart*, if we do not *rebuke* him, when we see him in a fault, but *suffer sin upon him;* this will soon bring leanness into our own soul; seeing, hereby we are *partakers of his sin*. By neglecting to reprove our neighbour, we make his sin our own. We become accountable for it to God: we saw his danger, and gave him no warning. So, "if he perish in his iniquity," God may justly "require his blood at our hand." No wonder then, if by thus grieving the Spirit, we lose the light of his countenance.

6. A third cause of our losing this is, the giving way to some kind of *inward sin*. For example: we know, every one that is "proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord;" and that, although this pride of heart should not appear in the outward conversation. Now how easily may a soul, filled with peace and joy, fall into this snare of the devil? How natural is it for him to imagine, that he has more grace, more wisdom or strength, than he really has? To "think more highly than he ought to think?" How natural, to glory in something he has received, as if he had not received it? But seeing God continually "resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble," this must certainly obscure, if not wholly destroy, the light which before shone on his heart.

7. The same effect may be produced by giving place to anger, whatever the provocation or occasion be: yea, though it were coloured over with the name of *zeal* for the

truth, or for the glory of God. Indeed, all zeal, which is any other than the flame of love, is "earthly, sensual, and devilish." It is the flame of wrath: it is flat, sinful anger, neither better nor worse.—And nothing is a greater enemy to the mild, gentle love of God than this: They never did, they never can subsist together in one breast. In the same proportion as this prevails, love and joy in the Holy Ghost decrease. This is particularly observable in the case of *offence;* I mean, anger at any of our brethren, at any of those who are united with us, by civil or religious ties. If we give way to the spirit of offence but one hour, we lose the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit: so that, instead of amending them, we destroy ourselves, and become an easy prey to any enemy that assaults us.

8. But suppose we are aware of this snare of the devil, we may be attacked from another quarter. When fierceness and anger are asleep, and love alone is waking, we may be no less endangered by *desire,* which equally tends to darken the soul. This is the sure effect of any foolish desire, any vain or inordinate affection. If we set our affection on things of the earth, on any person or thing under the sun; if we seek happiness in any creature; the jealous God will surely contend with us: for he cannot admit of any rival. And if we *will* not *hear* his warning *voice,* and return to him with our whole soul; if we continue to grieve him with our idols, and running after other gods, we shall soon be cold, barren, and dry, and *the god of this world* will *blind* and darken *our hearts.*

9. But this he frequently does, even when we do not give way to any positive sin. It is enough, it gives him sufficient advantage, if we do not "stir up the gift of God, which is in us;" if we do not *agonize* continually "to enter in at the strait gate," if we do not earnestly "strive for the mastery," and "take the kingdom of heaven by violence." There needs no more than not to fight, and we are sure to be conquered. Let us only be careless or "faint in our minds;" let us be easy and indolent, and our natural darkness will soon return, and overspread our souls. It is enough, there-

fore, if we give way to *spiritual sloth:* this will effectually darken the soul. It will as surely destroy the light of God, if not so swiftly, as murder and adultery.

10. But it is well to be observed, that the cause of our darkness (whatsoever it be, whether omission or commission, whether inward or outward sin) is not always nigh at hand. Sometimes the sin, which occasioned the present distress, may lie at a considerable distance. It might be committed days, or weeks, or months before. And that God now withdraws his light and peace, on account of what was done so long ago, is not (as one might at first imagine) an instance of his severity, but rather a proof of his long-suffering and tender mercy. He waited all this time, if haply we would see, acknowledge and correct what was amiss. And in default of this, he at length shews his displeasure, if thus, at last, he may bring us to repentance.

(II.) 1. Another general cause of this darkness, is *ignorance;* which is likewise of various kinds. If men know not the Scriptures, if they imagine there are passages either in the Old or New Testament, which assert that all believers without exception, *must* sometimes be in darkness, this ignorance will naturally bring upon them the darkness which they expect. And how common a case has this been among us? How few are there, who do not expect it? And no wonder, seeing they are taught to expect it: seeing their guides lead them into this way. Not only the Mystic writers of the *Romish* Church, but many of the most spiritual and experimental in our own, (very few of the last century excepted) lay it down with all assurance, as a plain, unquestionable scriptural-doctrine, and cite many texts to prove it.

2. Ignorance also of the Work of God in the soul, frequently occasions this darkness. Men imagine, (because so they have been taught, particularly by writers of the *Romish* Communion, whose plausible assertions too many Protestants have received without due examination,) that they are not always to walk in *luminous faith;* that this is only a *lower dispensation;* that as they rise higher, they are to leave those *sensible comforts,* and to live by *naked*

faith: (*naked* indeed, if it be stripped both of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!) That a state of light and joy, is good; but a state of *darkness* and *dryness* is better: that it is, by these alone we can be *purified* from pride, love of the world, and inordinate self-love; and that therefore we ought neither to expect nor desire, to *walk in the light* always. Hence it is, (though other reasons may occur,) that the main body of pious men in the *Romish* Church, generally walk in a dark uncomfortable way, and if ever they receive, soon lose the light of God.

(III.) 1. A third general cause of this darkness, is temptation. When the candle of the Lord first shines on our head, temptation frequently flees away, and totally disappears. All is calm within: perhaps without too, while God makes our enemies to be at peace with us. It is then very natural to suppose, that we shall not see war any more. And there are instances, wherein this calm has continued, not only for weeks, but for months or years. But commonly it is otherwise: in a short time "the winds blow, the rains descend, and the floods arise" anew. *They* who *know not either the Son, or the Father*, and consequently, hate his children, when God slackens the bridle which is in their teeth, will shew that hatred in various instances. As of old, "he that is born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit;" even so it is now; the same cause still producing the same effect. The evil which yet remains in the heart, will then also move afresh: anger and many other *roots of bitterness*, will endeavour to spring up. At the same time, Satan will not be wanting, to cast in his fiery darts: and the soul will have to *wrestle*, not only with the world, *not* only "with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with wicked spirits in high places." Now when so various assaults are made at once, and perhaps with the utmost violence, it is not strange if it should occasion, not only heaviness, but even darkness in a weak believer. More especially, if he was not watching, if these assaults are made in an hour when he looked not for them: if he ex-

pected nothing less, but had fondly told himself,—"The day of evil would return no more."

2. The force of those temptations which arise from within, will be exceedingly heightened, if we before thought too highly of ourselves, as if we had been cleansed from all sin. And how naturally do we imagine this, during the warmth of our first love? How ready are we to believe, that God has *fulfilled in us the whole work of faith with power?* That because we *feel* no sin, we *have* none in us, but the soul is all love! And well may a sharp attack from an enemy, whom we suppose to be not only conquered, but slain, throw us into much heaviness of soul, yea, sometimes into utter darkness. Particularly when we *reason* with this enemy, instead of instantly calling upon God, and casting ourselves upon him, by simple faith, who "alone knoweth how to deliver his out of temptation."

III. These are the usual causes of this second darkness. Enquire we, Thirdly, What is the cure of it?

1. To suppose that this is one and the same in all cases, is a great and fatal mistake: and yet extremely common even among many, who pass for experienced Christians: yea, perhaps take upon them to be *teachers in Israel*, to be the guides of other souls. Accordingly they know and use but one medicine, whatever be the cause of the distemper. They begin immediately to apply the promises, to *preach the gospel*, as they call it. To give comfort, is the single point at which they aim: in order to which they say many soft and tender things, concerning the love of God to poor, helpless sinners, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Now this is *quackery* indeed, and that of the worst sort, as it tends, if not to kill men's bodies, yet without the peculiar mercy of God, "to destroy both their bodies and souls in hell." It is hard to speak of these "daubers with untempered mortar," these promise-mongers, as they deserve. They well deserve the title, which has been ignorantly given to others: they are *spiritual mountebanks*. They do, in effect, make "the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." They vilely prostitute the promises of God, by thus ap-

plying them to all, without distinction. Whereas, indeed, the cure of spiritual, as of bodily diseases, must be as various as the causes of them. The first thing, therefore, is, to find out the cause, and, this will naturally point out the cure.

2. For instance. Is it sin, which occasions darkness? What sin? Is it outward sin of any kind? Does your conscience accuse you of committing any sin, whereby you grieve the Holy Spirit of God? Is it on this account, that he is departed from you, and that joy and peace are departed with him? and how can you expect they should return, till you put away the accursed thing: "Let the wicked forsake his way?" "cleanse your hands, ye sinners," "put away the evil of your doings." So shall your "light break out of obscurity:" the Lord will return, and abundantly pardon."

3. If upon the closest search, you can find no sin of commission, which causes the cloud upon your soul, enquire next, if there be not some sin of omission, which separates between God and you. Do you "not suffer sin upon your brother?" Do you reprove them that sin in your sight? Do you walk in all the ordinances of God? In public, in family, in private prayer? If not; if you habitually neglect any one of these known duties, how can you expect, that the light of his countenance should continue to shine upon you? Make haste to "strengthen the things that remain:" then your souls shall live. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," he will by his grace supply what is lacking. When you hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way: walk you in it:" harden not your heart: Be no more disobedient to the heavenly calling. Till the sin, whether of omission or commission, be removed, all comfort is false and deceitful. It is only skinning the wound over, which still festers and rankles beneath. Look for no peace within, till you are at peace with God; which cannot be without "fruits meet for repentance."

4. But, perhaps, you are not conscious of even any *sin of omission*, which impairs your peace and joy in the Holy

Ghost. Is there not, then, some *inward sin*, which, as a "root of bitterness springs up" in your heart to "trouble you?" Is not your dryness, or barrenness of soul, occasioned by your hearts "departing from the living God?" Has not "the foot of pride come against" you? Have you not *thought* of yourself "more highly than you ought to think?" Have you not, in any respect, "sacrificed to your own net, and burnt incense to your own drag?" Have you not ascribed your success in any undertaking to your own courage, or strength, or wisdom? Have you not boasted of something "you have received, as though you had not received it?" Have you not gloried in any thing, "save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Have you not sought after or desired the praise of men? Have you not taken pleasure in it? If so, you see the way you are to take. If you have fallen by pride, "humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time." Have you not forced him to depart from you, by giving place to anger? Have you not "fretted yourself because of the ungodly," or "been envious against the evil-doers?" Have you not been offended at any of your brethren? Looking at their (real or imagined) sin, so as to sin yourself against the great law of love, by estranging your heart from them? Then look unto the Lord, that you may renew your strength, that all this sharpness and coldness may be done away, that love, and peace, and joy, may return together, and you may be invariably kind to each other, and "tender hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Have not you given way to any foolish desire? To any kind or degree of inordinate affection? How then can the love of God have place in your heart, till you put away your idols? "Be not deceived: God is not mocked:" he will not dwell in a divided heart: As long, therefore, as you cherish Delilah in your bosom, he has no place there: It is vain to hope for a recovery of his light, till you pluck out the right eye, and cast it from you. O, let there be no longer delay! Cry to him, that he may enable you so to do! Bewail your own impotence and

helplessness: and, the Lord being your helper, enter in at the strait gate: take the kingdom of heaven by violence! Cast out every idol from his sanctuary, and the glory of the Lord shall soon appear.

5. Perhaps it is this very thing, the want of striving, *spiritual sloth*, which keeps your soul in darkness. You dwell at ease in the land: there is no war in your coasts, and so you are quiet and unconcerned. You go on in the same even tract of outward duties, and are content there to abide. And do you wonder, meantime, that your soul is dead? O, stir yourself up before the Lord! Arise, and shake yourself from the dust: Wrestle with God for the mighty blessing. Pour out your soul unto God in prayer, and continue therein with all perseverance. Watch! Awake out of sleep, and keep awake! Otherwise, there is nothing to be expected, but that you will be alienated, more and more, from the light and life of God.

6. If, upon the fullest and most impartial examination of yourself, you cannot discern that you at present give way, either to spiritual sloth, or any other inward or outward sin, then call to mind the time that is past. Consider your former tempers, words, and actions. Have these been right before the Lord? "Commune with him in your chamber, and be still," and desire of him to try the ground of your heart, and bring to your remembrance whatever has at any time offended the eyes of his glory. If the guilt of any unrepented sin remain on your soul, it cannot be but you will remain in darkness, till, having been renewed by repentance, you are again washed by faith in "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness."

7. Entirely different will be the manner of the cure, if the cause of the disease be not sin, but ignorance. It may be, ignorance of the meaning of Scripture; perhaps occasioned by ignorant commentators; ignorant, at least, in this respect, however knowing and learned they may be in other particulars. And, in this case, that ignorance must be removed, before we can remove the darkness arising from it. We must shew the true meaning of those texts which have been

misunderstood. My design does not permit me to consider all the passages of Scripture which have been pressed into this service. I shall just mention two or three, which are frequently brought to prove, that all believers must, sooner or later, "walk in darkness."

8. One of these is, Isaiah l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." But, how does it appear, either from the text or context, that the person here spoken of, ever had light? One, who is convinced of sin, "feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant." And him we should advise, though he were still dark of soul, and had never seen the light of God's countenance, yet to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." This text, therefore, proves nothing less than that a believer in Christ "must sometimes *walk in darkness*."

9. Another text, which has been supposed to speak the same doctrine, is Hosea ii. 14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hence it has been inferred, that God will bring every believer *into the wilderness*, into a state of deadness and darkness. But, it is certain, the text speaks no such thing; for it does not appear that it speaks of particular believers at all. It manifestly refers to the Jewish nation; and, perhaps, to that only. But, if it be applicable to particular persons, the plain meaning of it is this: I will draw him by love; I will next convince him of sin, and then comfort him by my pardoning mercy.

10. A third scripture, from whence the same inference has been drawn, is that above recited, "Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again; and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." This has been supposed to imply, That God would, after a time, withdraw himself from all believers; and that they could not, till after they had thus sorrowed, have the joy which no man could take from them. But the whole context

shews, that our Lord is here speaking personally to the Apostles, and no others; and that he is speaking concerning those particular events, his own death and resurrection. "A little while," says he, "and ye shall not see me," viz. whilst I am in the grave: "And again, a little while, and ye shall see me," when I am risen from the dead. "Ye will weep and lament, and the world will rejoice: but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—"Ye now have sorrow," because I am about to be taken from your head: "but I will see you again," after my resurrection, "and your heart shall rejoice."—"And your joy," which I will then give you, "no man taketh from you." All this, we know, was literally fulfilled, in the particular case of the Apostles. But no inference can be drawn from hence, with regard to God's dealings with believers in general.

11. A fourth text, (to mention no more,) which has been frequently cited in proof of the same doctrine, is, 1 Pet. iv. 12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." But this is full as foreign to the point as the preceding. The text, literally rendered, runs thus: "Beloved, wonder not at the burning, which is among you, which is for your trial." Now, however this may be accommodated to inward trials in a secondarily sense, yet, primarily, it doubtless refers to martyrdom, and the sufferings connected with it. Neither, therefore, is this text any thing at all to the purpose, for which it is cited. And we may challenge all men to bring one text, either from the Old or New Testament, which is any more to the purpose than this.

12. "But is not darkness much more profitable for the soul than light? Is not the work of God in the heart most swiftly and effectually carried on, during a state of inward suffering? Is not a believer more swiftly and thoroughly purified by sorrow, than by joy?—by anguish, and pain, and distress, and spiritual martyrdoms, than by continual peace?" So the mystics teach: so it is written in their books; but not in the Oracles of God. The Scripture no where says, that the absence of God best perfects his work

in the heart! Rather, his presence, and a clear communion with the Father and the Son. A strong consciousness of this, will do more in an hour, than his absence in an age. Joy in the Holy Ghost will far more effectually purify the soul, than the want of that joy; and the peace of God is the best mean of refining the soul from the dross of earthly affections. Away, then, with the idle conceit, that the kingdom of God is divided against itself; that the peace of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are obstructive of righteousness; and that *we are saved*, not *by faith*, but by unbelief; not by hope, but by despair!

13. So long as men dream thus, they may well "walk in darkness:" nor can the effect cease, till the cause is removed. But yet, we must not imagine it will immediately cease, even when the cause is no more. When either ignorance or sin has caused darkness, one or the other may be removed, and yet the light which was obstructed thereby, may not immediately return. As it is the free gift of God, he may restore it, sooner or later, as it pleases him. In the case of sin, we cannot reasonably expect that it should immediately return. The sin began before the punishment, which may, therefore, justly remain, after the sin is at an end. And, even, in the natural course of things, though a wound cannot be healed while the dart is sticking in the flesh, yet, neither is it healed as soon as that is drawn out; but soreness and pain may remain long after.

14. Lastly: If darkness be occasioned by manifold, and heavy, and unexpected temptations, the best way of removing and preventing this is, to teach believers always to expect temptation: seeing they dwell in an evil world, among wicked, subtle, malicious spirits, and have an heart capable of all evil. Convince them, that the whole work of Sanctification is not, as they imagined, wrought at once: that, when they first believe, they are but as new-born babes, who are gradually to grow up, and may expect many storms, before they come to the full stature of Christ. Above all, let them be instructed, when the storm is upon them, not to reason with the devil, but to pray; to pour out their souls

before God, and shew him of their trouble. And these are the persons, unto whom, chiefly, we are to apply the great and precious promises: (not to the ignorant, till the ignorance is removed; much less to the impenitent sinner.) To these we may largely and affectionately declare the loving-kindness of God our Saviour, and expatiate upon his tender mercies, which have been ever of old. Here we may dwell upon the faithfulness of God, whose "word is tried to the uttermost," and upon the virtue of that blood, which was shed for us, to "cleanse us from all sin." And God will then bear witness to his word, and bring their souls out of trouble. He will say, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Yea, and that light, if thou walk humbly and closely with God, will shine more and more "unto the perfect day."

SERMON L.

ON HEAVINESS THROUGH MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS.

1 Peter i. 6.

"*Now, for a season, if need be, ye are in Heaviness, through Manifold Temptations.*"

1. IN the preceding discourse, I have particularly spoken of that *Darkness* of mind, into which those are often observed to fall, who once walked in the light of God's countenance. Nearly related to this is the *Heaviness* of soul, which is still more common, even among believers. Indeed, almost all the children of God experience this, in an higher or lower degree. And, so great is the resemblance between one and the other, that they are frequently confounded together: and we are apt to say, indifferently, Such an one is in *darkness*, or, such an one is in *heaviness;* as if they were equivalent terms, one of which implied no more than the other. But they are far, very far from it. Darkness is one thing; heaviness is another. There is a difference, yea, a wide and essential difference, between the former and the latter. And such a difference it is, as all the children of God are deeply concerned to understand: otherwise, nothing will be more easy, than for them to slide out of heaviness

into darkness. In order to prevent this, I will endeavour to shew,

I. What manner of persons those were, to whom the Apostle says, "Ye are in Heaviness:"

II. What kind of Heaviness they were in:

III. What were the Causes; and,

IV. What were the Ends of it. I shall conclude with some inferences.

I. 1. I am, in the First place, to shew, What manner of persons those were, to whom the Apostle says, "Ye are in Heaviness." And, First, It is beyond all dispute, that they were believers at the time the Apostle thus addressed them. For so he expressly says, ver. 5, "Ye who are kept through the power of God by faith unto salvation." Again, ver. 7, he mentions "the trial of their faith, much more precious than that of gold, which perisheth." And yet, again, ver. 9, he speaks of their "receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls." At the same time, therefore, that they were "in heaviness," they were possessed of living faith. Their heaviness did not destroy their faith: They still "endured, as seeing him that is invisible."

2. Neither did their heaviness destroy their peace, the peace which passeth all understanding, which is inseparable from true, living faith. This we may easily gather from the second verse, wherein the Apostle prays, not that *peace* may be given them, but only, that it may "be multiplied unto them;" that the blessing, which they already enjoyed, might be more abundantly bestowed upon them.

3. The persons to whom the Apostle here speaks, were also full of a living hope. For thus he speaks, ver. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again," me and you, all of us who are "sanctified by the Spirit," and enjoy the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," "unto a living hope, to an inheritance," that is, unto a living hope of an inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." So that, notwithstanding

their heaviness, they still retained an hope full of immortality.

4. And they still "rejoiced in hope of the glory of God." They were filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. So, ver. 8, the Apostle having just mentioned the final "Revelation of Jesus Christ," (namely, when he cometh to judge the world), immediately adds, "In whom, though now ye see him not," (not with your bodily eyes,) "yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Their heaviness, therefore, was not only consistent with a living hope, but also with *joy unspeakable:* at the same time they were thus heavy, they, nevertheless, rejoiced with *joy full of glory.*

5. In the midst of their heaviness, they likewise still enjoyed the love of God, which had been shed abroad in their hearts;—"whom," says the Apostle, "having not seen, ye love." Though ye have not seen him face to face, yet, knowing him by faith, ye have obeyed his word, "My son, give me thy heart." He is your God, and your Love, and desire of your eyes, and your "exceeding great reward." Ye have sought, and found happiness in him: ye "delight in the Lord, and he hath given you your hearts' desire."

6. Once more. Though they were heavy, yet were they holy: they retained the same power over sin. They were still "kept" from this "by the power of God:" they were "obedient children, not fashioned according to their former desires," but, "as he that had called them is holy," so were they "holy in all manner of conversation." Knowing they were "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without spot and without blemish," they had, through the faith and hope which they had in God, "purified their souls by the Spirit." So, that, upon the whole, their heaviness well consisted with faith, with hope, with love of God and man, with joy in the Holy Ghost, with inward and outward holiness. It did no way impair, much less destroy, any part of the work of God in their hearts. It did not at all interfere with the "sanctification of the Spirit," which is the root of all true *obedience;* neither with the happiness,

which must needs result from *grace and peace*, reigning in the heart.

II. 1. Hence, we may easily learn what kind of heaviness they were in: The Second thing which I shall endeavour to shew. The word in the original is λυπηθεντες, *made sorry, grieved*, from λυπη, *grief*, or *sorrow*. This is the constant, literal meaning of the word: and, this being observed, there is no ambiguity in the expression, nor any difficulty in understanding it. The persons spoken of here, were *grieved:* The heaviness they were in was neither more nor less than *sorrow*, or *grief;* a passion, which every child of man is well acquainted with.

2. It is probable our translators rendered it *heaviness*, (though a less common word,) to denote two things, First, The degree; and next, The continuance of it. It does, indeed, seem, that it is not a slight or inconsiderable degree of grief which is here spoken of, but such as makes a strong impression upon, and sinks deep into, the soul. Neither does this appear to be a transient sorrow, such as passes away in an hour: but, rather, such as, having taken fast hold of the heart, is not presently shaken off, but continues, for some time, as a settled temper, rather than a passion, even in them that have a living faith in Christ, and the genuine love of God in their hearts.

3. Even in these, this heaviness may sometimes be so deep, as to overshadow the whole soul, to give a colour, as it were, to all the affections, such as will appear in the whole behaviour. It may, likewise, have an influence over the body: particularly in those that are either of a naturally weak constitution, or are weakened by some accidental disorder, especially of the nervous kind. In many cases we find "the corruptible body presses down the soul:" in this, the soul rather presses down the body, and weakens it more and more. Nay, I will not say, that deep and lasting sorrow of heart, may not, sometimes, weaken a strong constitution, and lay the foundation of such bodily disorders, as are not easily removed. And yet all this may consist with a measure of that *faith which* still *worketh by love.*

4. This may well be termed a *fiery trial:* and though it is not the same that the Apostle speaks of in the fourth chapter, yet many of the expressions there used concerning outward suffering, may be accommodated to this inward affliction. They cannot, indeed, with any propriety, be applied to them that are *in darkness:* these do not, cannot *rejoice;* neither is it true, that "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them." But he frequently doth on those that are *in heaviness*, so that, though *sorrowful, yet* are they *always rejoicing*.

III. 1. But, to proceed to the Third point, What are the causes of such sorrow or heaviness in a true believer? The Apostle tells us clearly: "Ye are in heaviness," says he, "through manifold temptations:" ποικίλοις, *manifold;* not only many in number, but of many kinds. They may be varied and diversified a thousand ways, by the change or addition of numberless circumstances. And this diversity and variety, makes it more difficult to guard against them. Among these, we may rank all bodily disorders: particularly, acute diseases, and violent pain of every kind, whether affecting the whole body, or the smallest part of it. It is true, some, who have enjoyed uninterrupted health, and have felt none of these, may make light of them, and wonder that sickness, or pain of body, should bring heaviness upon the mind. And, perhaps, one in a thousand is of so peculiar a constitution, as not to feel pain, like other men. So hath it pleased God to shew his almighty power by producing some of these prodigies of nature, who have seemed not to regard pain at all, though of the severest kind; if that contempt of pain were not owing partly to the force of education, partly to a preternatural cause; to the power either of good or evil spirits, who raised those men above the state of mere nature. But, abstracting from these particular cases, it is, in general, a just observation, That

> "Pain is perfect misery, and extreme—
> Quite overturns all patience."

And even where this is prevented by the grace of God,

where men do "possess their souls in patience," it may, nevertheless, occasion much inward heaviness, the soul sympathizing with the body.

2. All diseases of long continuance, are apt to produce the same effect. When God *appoints over* us *consumption*, or *the chilling and burning ague*, if it be not speedily removed, it will not only "consume the eyes," but "cause sorrow of heart." This is eminently the case, with regard to all those which are termed *nervous disorders*. And faith does not overturn the course of nature: Natural causes still produce natural effects. Faith no more hinders the *sinking of the spirits* (as it is called) in an hysteric illness, than the rising of the pulse in a fever.

3. Again, when "calamity cometh as a whirlwind, and poverty as an armed man," is this a little temptation? Is it strange if it occasion sorrow and heaviness? Altho' this also may appear but a small thing to those that stand at a distance, or who look, and "pass on the other side," yet it is otherwise to them who feel it. "Having food and raiment," (indeed, the latter word, σκεπασματα, implies lodging, as well as apparel) we may, if the love of God is in our hearts, "be therewith content." But what shall they do, who have none of these? Who, as it were, "embrace the rocks for a shelter?" Who have only the earth to lie upon, and only the sky to cover them? Who have not a dry, or warm, much less a clean abode for themselves and their little ones? No, nor clothing to keep themselves, or those they love next themselves, from pinching cold, either by day or night? I laugh at the stupid Heathen, crying out,

> Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
> Quam quod ridiculos homines facit!

Has poverty nothing worse in it than this, that it *makes men liable to be laughed at?* It is a sign this idle poet talked by rote of the things which he knew not. Is not want of food something worse than this? God pronounced it as a curse upon man, that he should earn it by "the sweat of his

brow." But how many are there in this Christian country, that toil, and labour, and sweat, and have it not at last, but struggle with weariness and hunger together? Is it not worse, for one, after a hard day's labour, to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food which is needful to repair his wasted strength? You that live at ease in the earth, that want nothing but eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand how well God hath dealt with you; is it not worse to seek bread day by day, and find none? Perhaps, to find the comfort also of five or six children, crying for what he has not to give. Were it not that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not soon *curse God and die?* O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means, unless he that hath felt it himself? I am astonished, it occasions no more than heaviness even in them that believe!

4. Perhaps, next to this, we may place the death of those who were near and dear unto us: of a tender parent, and one not much declined into the vale of years; of a beloved child, just rising into life, and clasping about our heart; of a friend that was as our own soul, next the grace of God, the last, best gift of heaven. And a thousand circumstances may enhance the distress: Perhaps, the child, the friend, died in our embrace! Perhaps, was snatched away, when we looked not for it! Flourishing, cut down like a flower! In all these cases, we not only may, but ought to be affected: it is the design of God that we should. He would not have us stocks and stones. He would have our affections regulated, not extinguished. Therefore,—"Nature unreprov'd may drop a tear." There may be sorrow without sin.

5. A still deeper sorrow we may feel, for those who are dead while they live;—on account of the unkindness, ingratitude, apostacy of those, who were united to us in the closest ties. Who can express what a lover of souls may feel for a friend, a brother dead to God? For a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, rushing into sin, as a horse into the battle, and, in spite of all arguments and persuasions, hasting to work out his own damnation? And this anguish

of spirit may be heightened to an inconceivable degree, by the consideration, that he, who is now posting to destruction, once ran well in the way of life. Whatever he was in time past, serves now to no other purpose, than to make our reflections on what he is, more piercing and afflictive.

6. In all these circumstances, we may be assured, our great adversary will not be wanting to improve his opportunity. He, who is always "walking about, seeking whom he may devour," will then, especially, use all his power, all his skill, if haply he may gain any advantage over the soul that is already cast down. He will not be sparing of his fiery darts, such as are most likely to find an entrance, and to fix most deeply in the heart, by their suitableness to the temptation that assaults it. He will labour to inject unbelieving, or blasphemous, or repining thoughts. He will suggest, that God does not regard, does not govern the earth: or, at least, that he does not govern it aright, not by the rules of justice and mercy. He will endeavour to stir up the heart against God, to renew our natural enmity against him. And if we attempt to fight him with his own weapons, if we begin to reason with him, more and more heaviness will, undoubtedly, ensue, if not utter darkness.

7. It has been frequently supposed, that there is another cause (if not of darkness) at least, of heaviness; namely, God's withdrawing himself from the soul, because it is his sovereign will. Certainly, he will do this, if we grieve his Holy Spirit, either by outward or inward sin; either by doing evil, or neglecting to do good; by giving way either to pride or anger, to spiritual sloth, to foolish desire, or inordinate affection. But that he ever withdraws himself because he will, merely because it is his good pleasure, I absolutely deny. There is no text, in all the Bible, which gives any colour for such a supposition. Nay, it is a supposition, contrary, not only to many particular texts, but to the whole tenor of Scripture. It is repugnant to the very nature of God: it is utterly beneath his majesty and wisdom, (as an eminent writer strongly expresses it) "to play at bo-peep with his creatures." It is inconsistent both with his justice

and mercy, and with the sound experience of all his children.

8. One more cause of heaviness is mentioned by many of those who are termed Mystic authors. And the notion has crept in, I know not how, even among plain people, who have no acquaintance with them. I cannot better explain this, than in the words of a late writer, who relates this, as her own experience. "I continued so happy in my Beloved, that, altho' I should have been forced to live a vagabond in a desart, I should have found no difficulty in it. This state had not lasted long, when, in effect, I found myself led into a desart.—I found myself in a forlorn condition, altogether poor, wretched, and miserable.—The proper source of this grief is, the knowledge of ourselves, by which we find, that there is an extreme unlikeness between God and us. We see ourselves most opposite to Him, and that our inmost soul is entirely corrupted, depraved, and full of all kind of evil and malignity, of the world and the flesh, and all sorts of abominations." From hence it has been inferred, that the knowledge of ourselves, without which we should perish everlastingly, must, even after we have attained justifying faith, occasion the deepest heaviness.

9. But upon this I would observe, 1. In the preceding paragraph, this writer says, "Hearing I had not a true faith in Christ, I offered myself up to God, and immediately felt his love." It may be so; and yet it does not appear, that this was justification. It is more probable, it was no more, than, what are usually termed, the "drawings of the Father." And if so, the heaviness and darkness which followed, was no other than conviction of sin, which, in the nature of things, must precede that faith whereby we are justified. 2. Suppose she was justified almost the same moment she was convinced of wanting faith, there was then no time for that gradually increasing of self-knowledge, which uses to precede justification: In this case, therefore, it came after, and was probably the more severe, the less it was expected. 3. It is allowed, there will be a far deeper,

a far clearer and fuller knowledge of our inbred sin, of our total corruption by nature, after justification, than ever there was before it. But this need not occasion darkness of soul: I will not say, that it *must* bring us into heaviness. Were it so, the Apostle would not have used that expression, *if need be:* for there would be an absolute, indispensable need of it, for all that would know themselves: that is, in effect, for all that would know the perfect love of God, and thereby be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But this is by no means the case. On the contrary, God may increase the knowledge of ourselves to any degree, and increase, in the same proportion, the knowledge of himself and the experience of his love. And, in this case, there would be no "desart, no misery, no forlorn condition;" but love, and peace, and joy, gradually springing up into everlasting life.

IV. 1. For what ends then, (which was the Fourth thing to be considered) does God permit heaviness to befal so many of his children? The Apostle gives us a plain and direct answer to this important question: "That the trial of their faith, which is much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the Revelation of Jesus Christ," ver. 7. There may be an allusion to this, in that well-known passage of the fourth chapter, (although it primarily relates to quite another thing, as has been already observed:) "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, but rejoice that ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may likewise rejoice with exceeding great joy," ver. 12, &c.

2. Hence we learn, that the first, and great end of God's permitting the temptations, which bring heaviness on his children, is the trial of their faith, which is tried by these, even as gold by the fire. Now we know gold tried in the fire, is purified thereby, is separated from its dross. And so is faith in the fire of temptation; the more it is tried, the more it is purified. Yea, and not only purified, but also

strengthened, confirmed, increased abundantly, by so many more proofs of the wisdom and power, the love and faithfulness of God. This, then, to increase our faith, is one gracious end of God's permitting those manifold temptations.

3. They serve to try, to purify, to confirm, and increase that living hope also, whereunto "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again of his abundant mercy." Indeed, our hope cannot but increase, in the same proportion with our faith. On this foundation it stands: Believing in his name, living by faith in the Son of God, we hope for, we have a confident expectation of the glory which shall be revealed. And, consequently, whatever strengthens our faith, increases our hope also. At the same time it increases our joy in the Lord, which cannot but attend an hope full of immortality. In this view the Apostle exhorts believers in the other chapter; "Rejoice, that ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ." On this very account, "happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And hereby ye are enabled, even in the midst of sufferings, to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

4. They rejoice the more, because the trials, which increase their faith and hope, increase their love also: both their gratitude to God for all his mercies, and their good-will to all mankind. Accordingly, the more deeply sensible they are of the loving-kindness of God their Saviour, the more is their heart inflamed with love to him "who first loved us." The clearer and stronger evidence they have of the glory that shall be revealed, the more do they love him who hath purchased it for them, and "given them the earnest" thereof "in their hearts." And this, the increase of their love, is another end of the temptations permitted to come upon them.

5. Yet another is, Their advance in holiness; holiness of heart, and holiness of conversation: The latter naturally resulting from the former; for a good tree will bring forth good fruit. And all inward holiness is the immediate fruit of the faith that worketh by love. By this the blessed Spirit purifies the heart from pride, self-will, passion; from love

of the world, from foolish and hurtful desires, from vile and vain affections. Beside that, sanctified afflictions have, through the grace of God, an immediate and direct tendency to holiness. Through the operation of his Spirit, they humble more and more, and abase the soul before God. They calm and meeken our turbulent spirit, tame the fierceness of onr nature, soften our obstinacy and self-will, crucify us to the world, and bring us to expect all our strength from, and to seek all our happiness in God.

6. And all these terminate in that great end, That our faith, hope, love, and holiness, *may be found* (if it doth not yet appear) *unto praise* from God himself, *and honour* from men and angels, *and glory* assigned by the great Judge, to all that have endured to the end. And this will be assigned in that awful day to every man "according to his works," according to the work which God had wrought in his heart, and the outward works which he has wrought for God: and, likewise, according to what he had suffered; so that all these trials are unspeakable gain. So many ways do these "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

7. Add to this, the advantage which others may receive, by seeing our behaviour under affliction. We find by experience, example frequently makes a deeper impression upon us than precept. And what examples have a stronger influence, not only on those who are partakers of like precious faith, but even on them who have not known God, than that of a soul calm and serene in the midst of storms; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; meekly accepting whatever is the will of God, however grievous it may be to nature; saying, in sickness and pain, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" In loss or want, "The Lord gave: the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!"

V. 1. I am to conclude with some inferences. And, First, how wide is the difference between *darkness* of soul, and *heaviness!* Which, nevertheless, are so generally con-

founded with each other, even by experienced Christians! Darkness, or the Wilderness-state, implies a total loss of joy in the Holy Ghost: heaviness does not; in the midst of this we may "rejoice with joy unspeakable." They that are in darkness, have lost the peace of God; they that are in heaviness, have not: so far from it, that at the very time *peace* as well as *grace* may *be multiplied unto* them. In the former, the love of God is waxed cold, if it be not utterly extinguished: in the latter it retains its full force, or, rather, increases daily. In those, faith itself, if not totally lost, is, however, grievously decayed. Their evidence and conviction of things not seen, particularly of the pardoning love of God, is not so clear or strong as in time past: and their trust in him is proportionably weakened. These, though they see him not, yet have a clear, unshaken confidence in God, and an abiding evidence of that love, whereby all their sins are blotted out. So that, as long as we can distinguish faith from unbelief, hope from despair, peace from war, the love of God from the love of the world, we may infallibly distinguish *heaviness* from *darkness*.

2. We may learn from hence, Secondly, That there may be need of *heaviness*, but there can be no need of *darkness*. There may be need of our being in *heaviness for a season*, in order to the ends above recited: at least, in this sense, as it is a natural result of those *manifold temptations*, which are needful to try and increase our faith, to confirm and enlarge our hope, to purify our hearts from all unholy tempers, and to perfect us in love. And, by consequence, they are needful, in order to brighten our crown, and add to our eternal weight of glory. But we cannot say, that darkness is needful, in order to any of these ends. It is no way conducive to them: the loss of faith, hope, love, is surely neither conducive to holiness, nor to the increase of that reward in heaven, which will be in proportion to our holiness on earth.

3. From the Apostle's manner of speaking we may gather, Thirdly, that even heaviness is not *always* needful. "Now, for a season, if need be:" so it is not needful for *all*

persons; nor for any person at *all times.* God is able, he has both power and wisdom, to work, when he pleases, the same work of grace in any soul, by other means. And, in some instances, he does so: he causes those whom it pleaseth him to go on from strength to strength, even till they *perfect holiness in* his *fear*, with scarce any heaviness at all: as having an absolute power over the heart of man, and moving all the springs of it at his pleasure. But these cases are rare: God generally sees good to try "acceptable men in the furnace of affliction." So that manifold temptations and heaviness, more or less, are usually the portion of his dearest children.

4. We ought, therefore, Lastly, to watch and pray, and use our utmost endeavours to avoid falling into darkness. But we need not be solicitous how to avoid, so much as how to improve, by heaviness. Our great care should be, so to behave ourselves under it, so to wait upon the Lord therein, that it may fully answer all the design of his love, in permitting it to come upon us: that it may be a mean of increasing our faith, of confirming our hope, of perfecting us in all holiness. Whenever it comes, let us have an eye to these gracious ends for which it is permitted, and use all diligence, that we may not "make void the counsel of God against ourselves." Let us earnestly *work together with him*, by the grace which he is continually giving us, in "purifying ourselves from all pollution, both of flesh and spirit," and daily "growing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," till we are received into his everlasting kingdom!

SERMON LI.

ON SELF-DENIAL.

LUKE IX. 23.

"*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me.*"

1. IT has been frequently imagined, that the direction here given, related chiefly, if not wholly, to the Apostles; at least, to the Christians of the first ages, or those in a state of persecution. But this is a grievous mistake: for, although our blessed Lord is here directing his discourse more immediately to his Apostles, and those other disciples, who attended him in the days of his flesh; yet, in them he speaks to us, and to all mankind, without any exception or limitation. The very reason of the thing puts it beyond dispute, that the duty, which is here enjoined, is not peculiar to them, or to the Christians of the early ages. It no more regards any particular order of men, or particular time, than any particular country. No: it is of the most universal nature, respecting all times, and all persons; yea, and all things: not meats and drinks only, and things pertaining to the senses. The meaning is, *If any man*, of whatever rank, station, circumstances, in any nation, in any age of the world, *will* effectually come after me, "let him

deny himself" in all things; let him "take up his cross," of whatever kind, yea, and that "daily, and follow me."

2. The *denying* ourselves, and the *taking up our cross*, in the full extent of the expression, is not a thing of small concern: It is not expedient only, as are some of the circumstantials of Religion; but it is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming, or continuing *his disciples*. It is absolutely necessary, in the very nature of the thing, to our *coming after him*, and *following him*. Insomuch, that, as far as we do not practise it, we are not *his disciples*. If we do not continually *deny ourselves*, we do not learn of him, but of other masters. If we do not *take up our cross daily*, we do not *come after him*, but after the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following him, we are not treading in his steps, but going back from, or, at least, wide of him.

3. It is for this reason, that so many ministers of Christ, in almost every age and nation, particularly since the Reformation of the Church from the innovations and corruptions which had gradually crept into it, have written and spoken so largely on this important duty, both in their public discourses, and private exhortations. This induced them to disperse abroad many tracts upon the subject; and some in our own nation. They knew both from the Oracles of God, and from the testimony of their own experience, how impossible it is not to deny our Master, unless we will deny ourselves: and how vainly we attempt to follow him that was crucified, unless we take up our own cross daily.

4. But may not this very consideration make it reasonable to enquire, If so much has been said and written on the subject already, what need is there to say or write any more? I answer, There are considerable numbers, even of people fearing God, who have not had the opportunity either of hearing what has been spoken, or reading what has been written upon it. And, perhaps, if they had read much of what has been written, they would not have been much profited. Many who have written, (some of them

large volumes,) do by no means appear to have understood the subject. Either they had imperfect views of the very nature of it, (and then they could never explain it to others,) or they were unacquainted with the due extent of it: they did not see how exceeding broad this command is; or they were not sensible of the absolute, the indispensable necessity of it. Others speak of it in so dark, so perplexed, so intricate, so mystical a manner, as if they designed, rather to conceal it from the vulgar, than to explain it to common readers. Others speak admirably well, with great clearness and strength, on the necessity of self-denial; but, then, they deal in generals only, without coming to particular instances, and so are of little use to the bulk of mankind, to men of ordinary capacity and education. And, if some of them do descend to particulars, it is to those particulars only, which do not affect the generality of men; since they seldom, if ever, occur in common life; such as the enduring imprisonment or tortures: the giving up, in a literal sense, their houses or lands, their husbands or wives, children, or life itself: to none of which we are called, nor are likely to be, unless God should permit times of public persecution to return. In the mean time, I know of no writer in the English tongue, who has described the nature of self-denial in plain and intelligible terms, such as lie level with common understandings, and applied it to those little particulars, which daily occur in common life. A discourse of this kind is wanted still: and it is wanted the more, because in every stage of the spiritual life, although there is a variety of particular hindrances, of our attaining grace or growing therein, yet are they all resolvable into these general ones, either we do not deny ourselves, or we do not take up our cross.

In order to supply this defect in some degree, I shall endeavour to shew, First, What it is for a man to deny himself, and what to take up his cross: and, Secondly, That if a man be not fully Christ's disciple, it is always owing to the want of this.

I. 1. I shall, First, endeavour to shew, What it is for

a man to "deny himself, and take up his cross daily." This is a point, which is, of all others, most necessary to be considered and thoroughly understood, even on this account, that it is, of all others, most opposed by numerous and powerful enemies. All our nature must certainly rise up against this, even in its own defence: the world, consequently, the men who take nature, not grace, for their guide, abhor the very sound of it. And the great enemy of our souls, well knowing its importance, cannot but move every stone against it. But this is not all: even those, who have in some measure shaken off the yoke of the devil, who have experienced, especially of late years, a real work of grace in their hearts, yet are no friends to this grand doctrine of Christianity, though it is so peculiarly insisted on by their Master. Some of them are as deeply and totally ignorant concerning it, as if there were not one word about it in the Bible. Others are farther off still, having unawares imbibed strong prejudices against it. These they have received partly from outside Christians; men of a fair speech and behaviour, who want nothing of godliness, but the power; nothing of religion, but the spirit: and partly from those who did once, if they do not now, "taste the powers of the world to come." But are there any of these, who do not both practise self-denial themselves, and recommend it to others? You are little acquainted with mankind, if you doubt of this. There are whole bodies of men, who only do not declare war against it. To go no further than London: Look upon the whole body of Predestinarians, who, by the free mercy of God, have lately been called out of the darkness of nature, into the light of faith. Are they patterns of self-denial? How few of them even profess to practise it at all! How few recommend it themselves, or are pleased with them that do? Rather, do they not continually represent it in the most odious colours, as if it were seeking "salvation by works," or "seeking to establish our own righteousness?" And how readily do Antinomians of all kinds, from the smooth Moravian, to the boisterous, foul-mouthed Ranter, join the cry, with their silly, unmeaning

cant of *legality*, and *preaching the law!* Therefore, you are in constant danger of being wheedled, hectored, or ridiculed out of this important gospel-doctrine, either by false teachers, or false brethren, (more or less beguiled from the simplicity of the gospel), if you are not deeply grounded therein. Let fervent prayer then go before, accompany, and follow, what you are now about to read, that it may be written in your heart by the finger of God, so as never to be erased.

2. But what is Self-denial? Wherein are we to deny ourselves? And whence does the necessity of this arise? I answer, The Will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature; equally binding every angel in heaven, and every man upon earth. Nor can it be otherwise: This is the natural, necessary result of the relation between creatures and their Creator. But if the Will of God be our one rule of action, in every thing, great and small, it follows, by undeniable consequence, that we are not to do our own will in any thing. Here, therefore, we see at once the nature, with the ground, and reason of self-denial. We see the nature of self-denial: It is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us. And we see the reason thereof, because we are creatures; because "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

3. This reason for self-denial must hold, even with regard to the angels of God in heaven; and with regard to man, innocent and holy, as he came out of the hands of his Creator. But a farther reason for it arises from the condition wherein all men are since the fall. We are all now "shapen in wickedness, and in sin did our mother conceive us." Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. On the other hand, it is the will of God, that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times, or in some things only, but at all times, and in all things. Here, therefore, is a farther ground for constant and universal self-denial.

4. To illustrate this a little farther. The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man, which once ran parallel with it, is now another path, not only different from it, but, in our present state, directly contrary to it: It leads from God. If, therefore, we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. Indeed, a man *of faint heart and feeble hands*, may *go in two ways*, one after the other. But he cannot walk in two ways at the same time: He cannot, at one and the same time, follow his own will, and follow the will of God: He must choose the one, or the other: denying God's will, to follow his own; or denying himself, to follow the will of God.

5. Now, it is undoubtedly pleasing, for the time, to follow our own will, by indulging, in any instance that offers, the corruption of our nature. But, by following it in any thing, we so far strengthen the perverseness of our will; and, by indulging it, we continually increase the corruption of our nature. So, by the food, which is agreeable to the palate, we often increase a bodily disease: it gratifies the taste, but it inflames the disorder: it brings pleasure, but it also brings death.

6. On the whole, then, to deny ourselves, is, to deny our own will, where it does not fall in with the will of God, and that however pleasing it may be. It is, to deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to God: That is, in effect, to refuse going out of our way, though into a pleasant, flowery path; to refuse what we know to be deadly poison, though agreeable to the taste.

7. And every one, that would follow Christ, that would be his real disciple, must not only *deny himself*, but *take up his cross* also. A cross is, any thing contrary to our will, any thing displeasing to our nature. So that taking up our cross goes a little farther than denying ourselves; it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task to flesh and blood; it being more easy to forego pleasure, than to endure pain.

8. Now in "running the race that is set before us," accord-

ing to the will of God, there is often a cross lying in the way; that is, something which is not only not joyous, but grievous, something which is contrary to our will, which is displeasing to our nature. What then is to be done? The choice is plain: either we must *take up our cross*, or we must turn aside from the way of God, "from the holy commandment delivered to us;" if we do not stop altogether, or turn back to everlasting perdition.

9. In order to the healing of that corruption, that evil disease, which every man brings with him into the world, it is often needful to pluck out, as it were, a right eye, to cut off a right hand; so painful is either the thing itself, which must be done, or the only means of doing it: the parting, suppose, with a foolish desire, with an inordinate affection: or a separation from the object of it, without which, it can never be extinguished. In the former kind, the tearing away such a desire or affection, when it is deeply rooted in the soul, is often like the piercing of a sword, yea, like "the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow." The Lord then *sits upon the* soul *as a refiner's fire*, to burn up all the dross thereof. And this is a cross indeed; it is essentially painful; it must be so, in the very nature of the thing. The soul cannot be thus torn asunder, it cannot pass through the fire without pain.

10. In the latter kind, the means to heal a sin-sick soul, to cure a foolish desire, an inordinate affection, are often painful, not in the nature of the thing, but from the nature of the disease. So when our Lord said to the rich young man, "Go, sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor," (as well knowing, this was the only mean of healing his covetousness,) the very thought of it gave him so much pain, that "he went away sorrowful;" choosing rather to part with his hope of heaven, than his possessions on earth. This was a burden he could not consent to lift, a cross he would not take up. And in the one kind or the other, every follower of Christ will surely have need to "take up his cross daily."

11. The *taking up*, differs a little from *bearing his cross*. We are then properly said to *bear our cross*, when we endure what is laid upon us without our choice, with meekness and resignation. Whereas, we do not properly *take up our cross*, but when we voluntarily suffer what is in our power to avoid: when we willingly embrace the will of God, though contrary to our own: when we choose what is painful, because it is the will of our wise and gracious Creator.

12. And thus it behoves every disciple of Christ to *take up*, as well as to *bear*, his cross. Indeed, in one sense, it is not *his* alone: it is common to him, and many others: seeing "there is no temptation befalls any man," *ει μη ανθρωπινος*· "but such as is common to men," such as is incident and adapted to their common nature and situation in the present world. But, in another sense, as it is considered with all its circumstances, it is his; peculiar to himself: it is prepared of God for him: it is given by God to him, as a token of his love. And if he receive it as such, and, after using such means to remove the pressure, as christian wisdom directs, lies as clay in the potter's hand; it is disposed and ordered by God for his good, both with regard to the quality of it, and, in respect to its quantity and degree, its duration, and every other circumstance.

13. In all this, we may easily conceive our blessed Lord to act as the physician of our souls, not merely "for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." If, in searching our wounds, he puts us to pain, it is only in order to heal them. He cuts away what is putrified or unsound, in order to preserve the sound part. And if we freely choose the loss of a limb, rather than that the whole body should perish, how much more should we choose, figuratively, to cut off a right hand, rather than that the whole soul should be cast into hell!

14. We see plainly then both the nature and ground of *taking up our cross*. It does not imply the *disciplining ourselves*, (as some speak) the literally tearing our own flesh; the wearing hair-cloth, or iron girdles, or any thing else that

would impair our bodily health: (although we know not what allowance God may make for those who act thus thro' involuntary ignorance;) but the embracing the will of God, though contrary to our own; the choosing wholesome, tho' bitter medicines; the freely accepting temporary pain, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, when it is either essentially or accidentally necessary to eternal pleasure.

II. 1. I am, Secondly, to shew, That it is always owing to the want of self-denial, or taking up his cross, that any man does not thoroughly follow him, is not fully a disciple of Christ.

It is true, this may be partly owing, in some cases, to the want of the means of grace; of hearing the true word of God spoken with power; of the sacraments, or of Christian fellowship. But where none of these is wanting, the great hindrance of our receiving, or growing in the grace of God, is always the want of denying ourselves, or taking up our cross.

2. A few instances will make this plain. A man hears the word which is able to save his soul. He is well pleased with what he hears, acknowledges the truth, and is a little affected by it. Yet he remains "dead in trespasses and sins," senseless and unawakened. Why is this? Because he will not part with his bosom sin, though he knows it is an abomination to the Lord. He came to hear, full of lust and unholy desire: and he will not part with them. Therefore, no deep impression is made upon him, but his foolish heart is still hardened: that is, he is still senseless and unawakened, because he will not *deny himself*.

3. Suppose he begins to awake out of sleep, and his eyes are a little opened, Why are they so quickly closed again? Why does he again sink into the deep sleep of death? Because he again yields to his bosom-sin; he drinks again of the pleasing poison. Therefore, it is impossible that any lasting impression should be made upon his heart. That is, he relapses into his fatal insensibility, because he will not *deny himself*.

4. But this is not the case with all. We have many in-

stances of those, who, when once awakened, sleep no more. The impressions, once received, do not wear away: They are not only deep, but lasting. And yet, many of these have not found what they seek: They mourn, and yet are not comforted. Now, why is this? It is because they do not "bring forth fruits meet for repentance:" because they do not, according to the grace they have received, "cease from evil, and do good." They do not cease from the easily besetting sin, the sin of their constitution, of their education, or of their profession. Or they omit doing the good they may, and know they ought to do, because of some disagreeable circumstance attending it: that is, they do not attain faith, because they will not "deny themselves," or "take up their cross."

5. But this man did receive "the heavenly gift." He did "taste of the powers of the world to come." He saw "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." The "peace which passeth all understanding," did "rule his heart and mind; and the love of God was shed abroad therein by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him." Yet he is now weak as another man. He again relishes the things of earth, and has more taste for the things which are seen, than for those which are not seen. The eye of his understanding is closed again, so that he cannot "see him that is invisible." His love is waxed cold, and the peace of God no longer rules in his heart. And no marvel; for he has again given place to the devil, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. He has turned again unto folly, to some pleasing sin, if not in outward act, yet in heart. He has given place to pride, or anger, or desire, to self-will, or stubbornness. Or he did not stir up the gift of God which was in him; he gave way to spiritual sloth, and would not be at the pains of "praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." That is, he made shipwreck of the faith, for want of self-denial, and "taking up his cross daily."

6. But perhaps he has not made shipwreck of the faith: he has still a measure of the Spirit of adoption, which continues to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.

However he is not "going on to perfection:" he is not as one hungering and thirsting after righteousness, panting after the whole image and full enjoyment of God, as the hart after the water-brook. Rather he is weary and faint in his mind, and, as it were, hovering between life and death. And why is he thus, but because he hath forgotten the word of God, "By works is faith made perfect?" He does not use all diligence, in working the works of God. He does not "continue instant in prayer," private as well as public; in communicating, hearing, meditation, fasting, and religious conference. If he does not wholly neglect some of these means, at least he does not use them all, with his might. Or he is not zealous of works of charity, as well as works of piety. He is not merciful after his power, with the full ability which God giveth. He does not fervently serve the Lord, by doing good to men, in every kind, and in every degree he can, to their souls as well as their bodies. And why does he not continue in prayer? Because in times of dryness it is pain and grief unto him. He does not continue in hearing at all opportunities, because sleep is sweet; or it is cold, or dark, or rainy. But why does he not continue in works of mercy? Because he cannot feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, unless he retrench the expense of his own apparel, or use cheaper and less pleasing food. Beside which, the visiting the sick, or those that are in prison, is attended with many disagreeable circumstances. And so are most works of spiritual mercy: reproof, in particular. He *would* reprove his neighbour; but sometimes shame, sometimes fear comes between. For he may expose himself, not only to ridicule, but to heavier inconveniences too. Upon these and the like considerations, he omits one or more, if not all works of mercy and piety. Therefore, his faith is not made perfect, neither can he grow in grace: namely, because he will not "deny himself, and take up his daily cross."

7. It manifestly follows, That it is always owing to the want either of self-denial or taking up his cross, that a man does not thoroughly follow his Lord, that he is not fully a disciple of Christ. It is owing to this, that he, who is dead

in sin, does not awake, though the trumpet be blown; that he, who begins to awake out of sleep, yet has no deep or lasting conviction: that he, who is deeply and lastingly convinced of sin, does not attain remission of sins: that some, who have received this heavenly gift, retain it not, but make shipwreck of the faith: and that others, if they do not draw back to perdition, yet are weary and faint in their minds, and do not reach the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

III. 1. How easily may we learn from hence, that they know neither the Scripture nor the Power of God, who directly or indirectly, in public or in private, oppose the doctrine of self-denial and the daily cross. How totally ignorant are these men, of an hundred particular texts, as well as of the general tenor of the whole Oracles of God? And how entirely unacquainted must they be, with true, genuine, christian experience: Of the manner wherein the Holy Spirit ever did, and does at this day work in the souls of men? They may talk indeed very loudly and confidently, (a natural fruit of ignorance,) as though they were the only men, who understood either the word of God, or the experience of his children. But their words are, in every sense, *vain words:* they are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

2. We may learn from hence, Secondly, the real cause why not only many particular persons, but even bodies of men, who were once burning and shining lights, have now lost both their light and heat. If they did not hate and oppose, they, at least, lightly esteemed this precious gospel doctrine. If they did not boldly say, *Abnegationem omnem proculcamus, internecioni damus;* "We trample all self-denial under foot, we devote it to destruction:" yet they neither valued it according to its high importance, nor took any pains in practising it. *Hanc mystici docent*, said that great, bad man, *The mystic writers teach self-denial.*—No, the inspired Writers. And God teaches it to every soul, who is willing to hear his voice.

3. We may learn from hence, Thirdly, that it is not enough for a minister of the gospel, not to oppose the doc-

trine of self-denial, to say nothing concerning it. Nay, he cannot satisfy his duty, by saying a little in favour of it. If he would indeed be pure from the blood of all men, he must speak of it frequently and largely; he must inculcate the necessity of it, in the clearest and strongest manner; he must press it with his might, on all persons, at all times, and in all places: laying "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept." So shall he have a conscience void of offence: so shall he save his own soul and those that hear him.

4. Lastly: See that you apply this, every one of you, to your own souls. Meditate upon it when you are in secret: ponder it in your hearts. Take care not only to understand it thoroughly, but to remember it to your life's end. Cry unto the strong for strength, that you may no sooner understand, than enter upon the practice of it. Delay not the time, but practise it immediately, from this very hour: Practise it universally, on every one of the thousand occasions, which will occur in all circumstances of life: Practise it daily, without intermission, from the hour you first set your hand to the plough, and perseveringly enduring therein to the end, till your spirit returns to God.

SERMON LII.

THE CURE OF EVIL-SPEAKING.

MATTHEW xviii. 15,—17.

"If thy Brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother.

"But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

"And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

1. "SPEAK evil of no man," says the great Apostle: as plain a command as "Thou shalt do no murder." But who, even among Christians, regards this command? Yea, how few are there, that so much as understand it? What is *Evil-speaking?* It is not, as some suppose, the same with lying or slandering. All a man says may be as true as the Bible; and yet the saying of it is evil-speaking. For evil-speaking is neither more nor less, than speaking evil of an absent person, relating something evil, which was really done or said by one that is not present when it is related. Suppose, having seen a man drunk, or heard him curse or swear, I tell this when he is absent; it is evil-speaking. In

our language, this is also by an extremely proper name, termed BACKBITING. Nor is there any material difference between this and what we usually stile TALE-BEARING. If the tale be delivered in a soft quiet manner, (perhaps with expressions of good-will to the person, and of hope, that things may not be quite so bad,) then we call it WHISPERING. But in whatever manner it be done, the thing is the same; the same in substance if not in circumstance. Still it is evil-speaking; still this command, "Speak evil of no man," is trampled under foot, if we relate to another the fault of a third person, when he is not present to answer for himself.

2. And how extremely common is this sin, among all orders and degrees of men! How do high and low, rich and poor, wise and foolish, learned and unlearned, run into it continually! Persons, who differ from each other in all things else, nevertheless, agree in this. How few are there, that can testify before God, "I am clear in this matter: I have always set a watch before my mouth, and kept the door of my lips?" What conversation do you hear of any considerable length, whereof evil-speaking is not one ingredient? And that even among persons, who, in the general, have the fear of God before their eyes, and do really desire to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.

3. And the very commonness of this sin makes it difficult to be avoided. As we are encompassed with it on every side, so, if we are not deeply sensible of the danger, and continually guarding against it, we are liable to be carried away by the torrent. In this instance, almost the whole of mankind is, as it were, in a conspiracy against us. And their example steals upon us, we know not how; so that we insensibly slide into the imitation of it. Besides, it is recommended from within, as well as from without. There is scarce any wrong temper in the mind of man, which may not be occasionally gratified by it, and consequently incline us to it. It gratifies our pride, to relate those faults of others,

whereof we think ourselves not to be guilty. Anger, resentment, and all unkind tempers are indulged, by speaking against those, with whom we are displeased. And in many cases, by reciting the sins of their neighbours, men indulge their own foolish and hurtful desires.

4. Evil-speaking is the more difficult to be avoided, because it frequently attacks us in disguise. We speak thus, out of a noble, generous, (it is well, if we do not say,) holy indignation against these vile creatures! We commit sin, from mere hatred of sin! We serve the devil, out of pure zeal for God! It is merely in order to punish the wicked, that we run into this wickedness. "So do the passions" (as one speaks) "all justify themselves," and palm sin upon us, under the veil of holiness.

5. But is there no way to avoid the snare? Unquestionably there is. Our blessed Lord has marked out a plain way for his followers, in the words above recited. None, who warily and steadily walk in this path, will ever fall into evil-speaking. This rule is either an infallible preventative, or a certain cure of it. In the preceding verses, our Lord had said, "Woe to the world because of offences." Unspeakable misery will arise in the world, from this baleful fountain. (*Offences*, are all things, whereby any one is turned out of, or hindered in the ways of God.) "For it must be that offences come." Such is the nature of things: such the weakness, folly, and wickedness of mankind. "But woe to the man," miserable is that man, "by whom the offence cometh.—Wherefore, if thy hand, thy foot, thy eye cause thee to offend:" if the most dear enjoyment, the most beloved and useful person, turn thee out of, or hinder thee in the way, "pluck it out, cut them off, and cast them from thee." But how can we avoid giving offence to some, and being offended at others? Especially, suppose they are quite in the wrong, and we see it with our own eyes? Our Lord here teaches us how: He lays down a sure method of avoiding offences, and evil-speaking together. "If thy brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him of his fault,

between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church; but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

I. 1. First, "If thy brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone." The most literal way of following this first rule, where it is practicable, is the best. Therefore, if thou seest with thine own eyes a brother, a fellow-christian, commit undeniable sin, or hearest it with thine own ears, so that it is impossible for thee to doubt the fact, then thy part is plain. Take the very first opportunity of going to him: and if thou canst have access, "tell him of his fault between thee and him alone." Indeed great care is to be taken that this be done in a right spirit, and in a right manner.—The success of a reproof greatly depends on the spirit wherein it is given. Be not, therefore, wanting in earnest prayer to God, that it may be given in a lowly spirit: with a deep, piercing conviction, that it is God alone who maketh thee to differ, and that if any good be done by what is now spoken, God doth it himself. Pray that he would guard thy heart, enlighten thy mind, and direct thy tongue to such words as he may please to bless. See that thou speak in a meek as well as a lowly spirit: for the "wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." If he be "overtaken in a fault," he can no otherwise be restored than "in the spirit of meekness." If he opposes the truth, yet he cannot be brought to the knowledge thereof, but by gentleness. Still speak in a spirit of tender love, "which many waters cannot quench." If love be not conquered, it conquers all things. Who can tell the force of love?

Love can bow down the stubborn neck,
  The stone to flesh convert;
Soften, and melt, and pierce, and break
  An adamantine heart.

Confirm then your love toward him, and you will thereby "heap coals of fire upon his head."

2. But see that the manner also wherein you speak, be according to the gospel of Christ. Avoid every thing in look, gesture, word, and tone of voice, that savours of pride or self-sufficiency. Studiously avoid every thing magisterial or dogmatical, every thing that looks like arrogance or assuming. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt. With equal care avoid all appearance of anger, and though you use great plainness of speech, yet let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of any warmth, but that of love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill-will, no bitterness or sourness of expression; but use the air and language of sweetness as well as gentleness, that all may appear to flow from love in the heart. And yet this sweetness need not hinder your speaking in the most serious and solemn manner: as far as may be, in the very words of the Oracles of God, (for there are none like them) and as under the eye of him who is coming to judge the quick and dead.

3. If you have not an opportunity of speaking to him in person, or cannot have access, you may do it by a messenger; by a common friend in whose prudence, as well as uprightness, you can thoroughly confide. Such a person, speaking in your name, and in the spirit and manner above described, may answer the same end, and, in a good degree, supply your lack of service. Only beware you do not feign the want of opportunity, in order to shun the cross: neither take it for granted, that you cannot have access, without ever making the trial. Whenever you can speak in your own person, it is far better. But you should rather do it by another, than not at all: This way is better than none.

4. But, what if you can neither speak yourself, nor find such a messenger as you can confide in. If this be really the case, it then only remains, to write. And there may be some circumstances which make this the most adviseable way of speaking. One of these circumstances is when the

person with whom we have to do, is of so warm and impetuous a temper, as does not easily bear reproof, especially from an equal or inferior. But it may be so introduced and softened in writing, as to make it far more tolerable. Besides, many will read the very same words, which they could not bear to hear. It does not give so violent a shock to their pride, nor so sensibly touch their honour. And suppose it makes little impression at first, they will, perhaps, give it a second reading, and, upon farther consideration, lay to heart, what before they disregarded. If you add your name, this is nearly the same thing as going to him, and speaking in person. And this should always be done, unless it be rendered improper by some very particular reason.

5. It should be well observed, not only that this is a step which our Lord absolutely commands us to take, but that he commands us to take this step first, before we attempt any other. No alternative is allowed, no choice of any thing else: This is the way; walk thou in it. It is true, he enjoins us, if need require, to take two other steps. But they are to be taken successively after this step, and neither of them before it. Much less are we to take any other step, either before, or beside this. To do any thing else, or not to do this, is, therefore, equally inexcusable.

6. Do not think to excuse yourself for taking an entirely different step, by saying, "Why, I did not speak to any one, till I was so burdened, that I could not refrain." You were burdened! It was no wonder you should; unless your conscience was seared: for you were under the guilt of sin, of disobeying a plain commandment of God. You ought immediately to have gone and "told your brother of his fault between you and him alone." If you did not, how should you be otherwise than burdened, (unless your heart was utterly hardened,) while you were trampling the command of God under foot, and "hating your brother in your heart?" And what a way have you found to unburden yourself? God reproves you for a sin of omission, for not telling your brother of his fault: and you comfort yourself under his reproof, by a sin of commission, by telling your

brother's fault to another person! Ease bought by sin is a dear purchase: I trust in God you will have no ease, but will be burdened so much the more, till you "go to your brother, and tell him," and no one else.

7. I know but of one exception to this rule. There may be a peculiar case, wherein it is necessary to accuse the guilty, though absent, in order to preserve the innocent. For instance: You are acquainted with the design which a man has against the life or property of his neighbour. Now, the case may be so circumstanced, that there is no other way of hindering that design from taking effect, but the making it known, without delay, to him against whom it is laid. In this case, therefore, this rule is set aside, as is that of the Apostle; "speak evil of no man:" and it is lawful, yea, it is our bounden duty, to speak evil of an absent person, in order to prevent his doing evil to others and himself at the same time. But, remember, mean-while, that all evil-speaking is, in its own nature, deadly poison. Therefore, if you are sometimes constrained to use it as a medicine, yet use it with fear and trembling; seeing it is so dangerous a medicine, that nothing but absolute necessity can excuse your using it at all. Accordingly, use it as seldom as possible; never but when there is such a necessity: and even then use as little of it as is possible; only so much as is necessary for the end proposed. At all other times, "go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone."

II. 1. But what "if he will not hear?" If he repay evil for good? If he be enraged rather than convinced? What, if he hear to no purpose, and go on still in the evil of his way? We must expect this will frequently be the case; the mildest and tenderest reproof will have no effect, but the blessing we wished for another, will return into our own bosom. And what are we to do then? Our Lord has given us a clear and full direction. Then "take with thee one or two more:" This is the second step. Take one or two whom you know to be of a loving spirit, lovers of God, and of their neighbour. See, likewise, that they be of a lowly spirit, and "clothed with humility." Let them

also be such as are meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering; not apt to "return evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." Let them be men of understanding, such as are endued with wisdom from above; and men unbiassed, free from partiality, free from prejudice of any kind. Care should likewise be taken, that both the persons and their characters be well known to him. And let those that are acceptable to him be chosen preferable to any others.

2. Love will dictate the manner wherein they should proceed, according to the nature of the case. Nor can any one particular manner be prescribed for all cases. But, perhaps, in general, one might advise, before they enter upon the thing itself, let them mildly and affectionately declare that they have no anger or prejudice toward him, and that it is merely from a principle of good-will, that they now come, or at all concern themselves with his affairs. To make this the more apparent, they might then calmly attend to your repetition of your former conversation with him, and to what he then said in his own defence, before they attempted to determine any thing. After this they would be better able to judge in what manner to proceed, "that, by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word might be established:" That whatever you have said, may have its full force, by the additional weight of their authority.

3. In order to this, may they not, 1. Briefly repeat what you spoke, and what he answered? 2. Enlarge upon, open and confirm the reasons which you had given? 3. Give weight to your reproof, shewing how just, how kind, and how seasonable it was? And, Lastly, Enforce the advices and persuasions which you had annexed to it? And these may likewise hereafter, if need should require, bear witness of what was spoken.

4. With regard to this, as well as the preceding rule, we may observe that our Lord gives us no choice, leaves us no alternative, but expressly commands us to do this, and nothing else in the place of it. He likewise directs us when to do this. Neither sooner or later. Namely, *after*

we have taken the first, and *before* we have taken the third step. It is then, only, that we are authorized to relate the evil another has done, to those whom we desire to bear a part with us, in this great instance of brotherly love. But let us have a care how we relate it to any other person, till both these steps have been taken. If we neglect to take these, or if we take any others, what wonder if we are burdened still? For we are sinners against God, and against our neighbour. And, how fairly soever we may colour it, yet, if we have any conscience, our sin will find us out, and bring a burden upon our soul.

III. 1. That we may be thoroughly instructed in this weighty affair, our Lord has given us a still farther direction. "If he will not hear them," then, and not till then, "tell it to the Church." This is the third step. All the question is, How this word, "the Church," is here to be understood? But the very nature of the thing will determine this, beyond all reasonable doubt. You cannot tell it to the national Church, the whole body of men termed "the Church of England." Neither would it answer any Christian end, if you could: this, therefore, is not the meaning of the word. Neither can you tell it to that whole body of people in England, with whom you have a more immediate connection. Nor, indeed, would this answer any good end: the word, therefore, is not to be understood thus. It would not answer any valuable end, to tell the faults of every particular member to the Church, (if you would so term it,) the congregation or society united together in London. It remains that you tell it to the elder, or elders of the Church, to those who are overseers of that flock of Christ, to which you both belong, who watch over yours and his soul, "as they that must give account." And this should be done, if it conveniently can, in the presence of the person concerned, and, though plainly, yet with all the tenderness and love, which the nature of the thing will admit. It properly belongs to their office, to determine concerning the behaviour of those under their care, and to rebuke according to the demerit of the offence *with all authority*. When, therefore,

you have done this, you have done all which the word of God, or the law of love, requireth of you. You are not now partaker of his sin, but, if he perish, his blood is on his own head.

2. Here, also, let it be observed, that this, and no other, is the third step which we are to take: and that we are to take it in its order, after the other two; not before the second, much less the first; unless in some very particular circumstance. Indeed, in one case, the second step may coincide with this: they may be, in a manner, one and the same. The elder or elders of the Church, may be so connected with the offended brother, that they may set aside the necessity, and supply the place of the *one or two* witnesses. So that it may suffice to tell it to them, after you have told it to your brother, "between you and him alone."

3. When you have done this, you have delivered your own soul. "If he will not hear the Church," if he persist in his sin, "let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican." You are under no obligation to think of him any more: only when you commend him to God in prayer. You need not speak of him any more, but leave him to his own Master. Indeed, you still owe to him, as to all other heathens, earnest, tender good-will. You owe him courtesy, and, as occasion offers, all the offices of humanity. But have no friendship, no familiarity with him; no other intercourse than with an open heathen.

4. But if this be the rule by which Christians walk, Which is the land where the Christians live? A few you may possibly find scattered up and down, who make a conscience of observing it. But how very few! How thinly scattered upon the face of the earth! And where is there any body of men, that universally walk thereby? Can we find them in Europe? Or, to go no farther, in Great Britain or Ireland? I fear not: I fear we may search these kingdoms throughout, and yet search in vain. Alas, for the Christian world! Alas, for protestant, for reformed Christians! "O, who will rise up with me against the wicked?" "Who will take God's part" against the evil-speakers?

Art "thou the man?" By the grace of God wilt thou be one, who will not be carried away by the torrent? Art thou fully determined, God being thy helper, from this very hour to set a watch, a continual "watch before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips?" From this hour wilt thou walk by this rule, "speaking evil of no man?" If thou seest thy brother do evil, wilt thou "tell him of his fault between thee and him alone?" Afterwards "take one or two" witnesses, and then only "tell it to the Church?" If this be the full purpose of thy heart, then learn one lesson well, "Hear evil of no man;" If there were no hearers, there would be no speakers of evil. And is not (according to the vulgar proverb) the receiver as bad as the thief? If, then, any begin to speak evil in thy hearing, check him immediately. Refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so sweetly: let him use ever so soft a manner, so mild an accent, ever so many professions of good-will for him whom he is stabbing in the dark, whom he smiteth under the fifth rib. Resolutely refuse to hear, though the whisperer complain of being burdened till he speak. Burdened! Thou fool, dost thou travail with thy cursed secret as a woman travaileth with child? Go then, and be delivered of thy burden, in the way the Lord hath ordained. First, "Go, and tell thy brother of his fault between thee and him alone." Next, "take with thee one or two" common friends, and tell him in their presence. If neither of these steps take effect, then "tell it to the Church." But, at the peril of thy soul, tell it to no one else, either before or after, unless in that one exempt case, when it is absolutely needful to preserve the innocent. Why shouldst thou burden another as well as thyself, by making him partaker of thy sin?

3. O, that all who bear the reproach of Christ, who are in derision called Methodists, would set an example to the Christian world, so called, at least in this one instance! Put ye away evil-speaking, tale-bearing, whispering: let none of them proceed out of your mouth. See that you "speak evil of no man;" of the absent, nothing but good. If you must be distinguished, whether ye will or not, let this be the

distinguishing mark of a Methodist, "He censures no man behind his back: by this fruit ye may know him." What a blessed effect of this self-denial should we quickly feel in our hearts! How would our "peace flow as a river," when we thus "followed peace with all men!" How would the love of God abound in our own souls, while we thus confirmed our love to our brethren! And what an effect would it have on all that were united together in the name of the Lord Jesus! How would brotherly love continually increase, when this grand hindrance of it was removed! All the members of Christ's mystical body would then naturally care for each other! "If one member suffered, all would suffer with it;" "if one was honoured, all would rejoice with it;" and every one would love his brother "with a pure heart fervently." Nor is this all: But what an effect might this have, even on the wild, unthinking world! How soon would they descry in us, what they could not find among all the thousands of their brethren, and cry, (as Julian, the apostate, to his heathen courtiers,) "See how these Christians love one another!" By this chiefly would God convince the world, and prepare them also for his kingdom: as we may easily learn from those remarkable words in our Lord's last, solemn prayer: "I pray for them who shall believe in me, that they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,—that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The Lord hasten the time! The Lord enable us thus to love one another, not only "in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth," even as Christ hath loved us.

SERMON LIII.

ON THE USE OF MONEY.

LUKE XVI. 9.

"I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

1. OUR Lord, having finished the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, which he had particularly addressed to those who murmured at his receiving publicans and sinners, adds another relation of a different kind, addressed rather to the children of God. "He said unto his disciples," (ver. 1,) not so much to the scribes and pharisees, to whom he had been speaking before,—"There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and he was accused to him of wasting his goods. And calling him, he said, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward," (ver. 2.) After reciting the method, which the bad steward used, to provide against the day of necessity, our Saviour adds, "His lord commended the unjust steward," namely, in this respect, That he used timely precaution, and subjoins this weighty reflection, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light," (ver. 8.) Those, who seek no other portion than this world, are wiser, (not absolutely; for they are, one and all, the veriest fools, the most egregious madmen under heaven, but, "in their generation," in their own way; they are more consistent

with themselves, they are truer to their acknowledged principles, they more steadily pursue their end,) "than the children of light," than they who see "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Then follow the words above recited. "And I,"—the only-begotten Son of God, the Creator, Lord and Possessor of heaven and earth, and all that is therein; the Judge of all, to whom ye are to "give an account of your stewardship," when ye "can be no longer stewards; I say unto you," learn in this respect, even of the unjust steward, "make yourselves friends," by wise, timely precaution, "of the mammon of unrighteousness." *Mammon* means riches or money. It is termed "the mammon of unrighteousness," because of the unrighteous manner wherein it is frequently procured, and wherein even that, which was honestly procured, is generally employed. "Make yourselves friends" of this, by doing all possible good, particularly to the children of God, "that when ye fail," when ye return to dust, when ye have no more place under the sun, those of them who are gone before, "may receive you," may welcome you "into everlasting habitations."

2. An excellent branch of Christian wisdom is here inculcated by our Lord on all his followers, namely, The right use of Money; a subject largely spoken of, after their manner, by men of the world; but not sufficiently considered by those, whom God hath chosen out of the world. These, generally, do not consider, as the importance of the subject requires, the use of this excellent talent. Neither do they understand how to employ it to the greatest advantage; the introduction of which into the world, is one admirable instance of the wise and gracious Providence of God. It has, indeed, been the manner of Poets, Orators, and Philosophers, in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society. Hence, nothing so commonly heard, as

> Ferrum, ferroque nocentius aurum:
>
> And gold, more mischievous than keenest steel.

Hence the lamentable complaint,

Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.

Nay, one celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen, in order to banish all vice at once, to "throw all their money into the sea:"

In mare proximum,
Summi materiem mali!

But is not all this mere empty rant? Is there any solid reason therein? By no means. For, let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame? "The love of money," we know, "is the root of all evil:" but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: it is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life. It is a most compendious instrument, of transacting all manner of business, and, (if we use it according to Christian wisdom), of doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a state of innocence, or were all men "filled with the Holy Ghost," so that, like the infant church at Jerusalem, "no man counted any thing he had his own," but "distribution was made to every one as he had need;" the use of it would be superseded; as we cannot conceive there is any thing of the kind, among the inhabitants of heaven. But, in the present state of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveller and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of an husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defence for the oppressed, a mean of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death.

3. It is, therefore, of the highest concern, that all, who

fear God, should know how to employ this valuable talent; that they should be instructed, how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And, perhaps, all the instructions, which are necessary for this, may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of "the mammon of unrighteousness."

I. 1. The first of these is, (he that heareth, let him understand!) "Gain all you can." Here we may speak like the children of the world: we meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life; nor, (which is in effect the same thing), at the expense of our health. Therefore, no gain whatsoever should induce us to enter into, or continue in, any employ, which is of such a kind, or is attended with so hard or so long labour, as to impair our constitution. Neither should we begin or continue in any business, which necessarily deprives us of proper seasons for food and sleep in such a proportion as our nature requires. Indeed, there is a great difference here: Some employments are absolutely and totally unhealthy: as those which imply the dealing much with arsenic, or other equally hurtful minerals; or the breathing an air tainted with steams of melting lead, which must at length destroy the firmest constitution. Others may not be absolutely unhealthy, but only to persons of a weak constitution. Such are those which require many hours to be spent in writing; especially if a person write sitting, and lean upon his stomach, or remain long in an uneasy posture. But, whatever it is which reason or experience shews to be destructive of health or strength, that we may not submit to; seeing "the life is more" valuable "than meat, and the body than raiment." And, if we are already engaged in such an employ, we should exchange it as soon as possible, for some, which, if it lessen our gain, will, however, not lessen our health.

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love our neighbour as ourselves. We cannot, if we love every one as ourselves, hurt any one *in his substance.* We cannot devour the increase of his lands, and, perhaps, his lands and houses themselves, by gaming, by over-grown bills, (whether on account of physic, of law, or any thing else,) or by requiring or taking such interest, as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawn-broking is excluded: seeing whatever good we might do thereby, all unprejudiced men see with grief to be abundantly overbalanced by the evil. And if it were otherwise, yet we are not allowed to "do evil that good may come." We cannot, consistently with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market-price. We cannot study to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own. Much less can we entice away, or receive any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain, by swallowing up his neighbour's substance, without gaining the damnation of hell.

4. Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbour *in his body.* Therefore, we may not sell any thing which tends to impair health. Such is, eminently, all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or spirituous liquors. It is true, these may have a place in medicine; they may be of use, in some bodily disorders: (although there would rarely be occasion for them, were it not for the unskilfulness of the practitioner.) Therefore, such as prepare and sell them only for this end, may keep their conscience clear. But who are they? Who prepare them only for this end? Do you know ten such distillers in England? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners-general. They murder his Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell, like sheep: And what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them: the curse of God cleaves to the stones, the timber, the furniture of them. The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire

that burns to the nethermost hell. Blood, blood is there: the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood! And canst thou hope, O thou man of blood, though thou art "clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day;" canst thou hope to deliver down the *fields of blood*, to the third generation? Not so; for there is a God in heaven: therefore, thy name shall be rooted out. Like as those whom thou hast destroyed, body and soul, "thy memorial shall perish with thee."

5. And are not they partakers of the same guilt, though in a lower degree, whether surgeons, apothecaries, or physicians, who play with the lives or health of men, to enlarge their own gain? Who purposely lengthen the pain or disease, which they are able to remove speedily? Who protract the cure of their patient's body, in order to plunder his substance? Can any man be clear before God, who does not shorten every disorder, "as much as he can," and remove all sickness and pain, "as soon as he can?" He cannot: for nothing can be more clear, than that he does not "do unto others, as he would they should do unto himself."

6. This is dear-bought gain. And so is whatever is procured by hurting our neighbour *in his soul*, by ministering, suppose, either directly or indirectly, to his unchastity or intemperance; which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire of pleasing him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have any thing to do with taverns, victualling-houses, opera-houses, play-houses, or any other places of public, fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent. But, if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sin of various kinds, then, it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. O, beware, lest God say in that day, "These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands."

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all, who are engaged in worldly

business, to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom, with respect to money, "Gain all you can." Gain all you can by honest industry: Use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time: If you understand yourself, and your relation to God and man, you know you have none to spare. If you understand your particular calling, as you ought, you will have no time that hangs upon your hands. Every business will afford some employment sufficient for every day and every hour. That wherein you are placed, if you follow it in earnest, will leave you no leisure for silly, unprofitable diversions. You have always something better to do, something that will profit you, more or less. And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Do it as soon as possible: No delay! No putting off from day to day, or from hour to hour. Never leave any thing till to-morrow, which you can do to-day. And do it as well as possible. Do not sleep or yawn over it: Put your whole strength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a slight and careless manner. Let nothing in your business be left undone, if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe, how few do this: how men run on in the same dull track with their forefathers. But whatever they do, who know not God, this is no rule for you. It is a shame for a Christian, not to improve upon *them*, in whatever he takes in hand. You should be continually learning, from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading, and reflection, to do every thing you have to do, better to-day than you did yesterday. And see that you practise whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can." Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expenses,

which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly, in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: an honest heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly at least) impair the understanding. And yet, (to mention no other effects of it now,) it cannot be maintained without considerable expense. Cut off all this expense: Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by superfluous and expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses, in superfluous or expensive furniture: in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books: in elegant, rather than useful, gardens. Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this: "Let the dead bury their dead." But "what is that to thee?" says our Lord: "Follow thou me." Are you willing? Then you are able so to do.

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expense is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify their eye, or their imagination, but their vanity too. "So long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." So long as thou art "clothed in purple and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day," no doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honour that cometh from God.

5. Who would expend any thing in gratifying these

desires, if he considered, that to gratify them is to increase them. Nothing can be more certain than this: daily experience shews, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever, therefore, you expend any thing to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out your money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, for a stronger attachment to those pleasures which perish in their using. While you are purchasing any thing which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you not then enough of vanity, sensuality, curiosity, before? Was there need of any addition? And would you pay for it too? What manner of wisdom is this? Would not the literally throwing your money into the sea, be a less mischievous folly?

6. And why should you throw away money upon your children, any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind? Why should you purchase for them more pride or lust, more vanity, or foolish and hurtful desires? They do not want any more: they have enough already: Nature has made ample provision for them. Why should you be at farther expense to increase their temptations and snares, and to pierce them through with many sorrows?

7. Do not leave it to them to throw away. If you have good reason to believe they would waste what is now in your possession, in gratifying, and thereby increasing the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; at the peril of theirs and your own soul, do not set these traps in their way. Do not offer your sons or your daughters unto Belial, any more than unto Moloch. Have pity upon them, and remove out of their way what you may easily foresee would increase their sins, and, consequently, plunge them deeper into everlasting perdition. How amazing, then, is the infatuation of those parents, who think they can never leave their children enough! What! cannot you leave them enough of arrows, firebrands, and death? Not enough of foolish and hurtful desires? Not enough of pride, lust,

ambition, vanity? Not enough of everlasting burnings? Poor wretch! Thou fearest where no fear is. Surely both thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of "the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never shall be quenched!"

8. What then would you do, if you were in my case? If you had a considerable fortune to leave?" Whether I *would* do it, or not, I know what I *ought* to do: This will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money, one who, I believed, would put it to the true use, I should think it my absolute, indispensable duty, to leave that child the bulk of my fortune; and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. "But what if all your children were equally ignorant of the true use of money?" I ought then, (hard saying! Who can hear it?) to give each what would keep him above want: and to bestow all the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine, that he has done any thing barely by going thus far, by "gaining and saving all he can," if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a further end. Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save any thing, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If, therefore, you would indeed "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," add the third rule to the two preceding. Having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can.

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, When the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward. As such he intrusted you for a season with goods of various kinds. But the sole

property of these still rests in him, nor can ever be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you in most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be all an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service, he hath promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The direction which God hath given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be comprised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and a wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resuming whenever it pleases him, First, provide things needful for yourself, food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving the body in health and strength: Secondly, Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others, who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you give all you can; nay, in a sound sense, all you have: for all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

4. If then a doubt should at any time arise in your mind, concerning what you are going to expend, either on yourself or any part of your family, you have an easy way to remove it. Calmly and seriously enquire, 1. In expending this, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a steward of my Lord's goods? 2. Am I doing this in obedience to his Word? In what portion of it does he require me so to do? 3. Can I offer up this action, this expense, as a sacrifice to God

through Jesus Christ? 4. Have I reason to believe, that for this very work I shall have a reward at the resurrection of the just? You will seldom need any thing more to remove any doubt which arises on this head; but, by this four-fold consideration, you will receive clear light as to the way wherein you should go.

5. If any doubt still remain, you may farther examine yourself by prayer, according to those heads of enquiry. Try whether you can say to the Searcher of Hearts, your conscience not condemning you, "Lord, thou seest, I am going to expend this sum, on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knowest, I act therein with a single eye, as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus, in pursuance of the design thou hadst in entrusting me with them. Thou knowest I do this in obedience to thy word, as thou commandest, and because thou commandest it. Let this, I beseech thee, be an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Jesus Christ! And give me a witness in myself, that for this labour of love, I shall have a recompense, when thou rewardest every man according to his works." Now, if your conscience bear you witness in the Holy Ghost, that this prayer is well-pleasing to God, then have you no reason to doubt, but that expense is right and good, and such as will never make you ashamed.

6. You see, then, what it is, to "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and by what means you may procure, "that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." You see the nature and extent of true Christian prudence, so far as it relates to the use of that great talent, Money. Gain all you can, without hurting either yourself or your neighbour, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you. Save all you can, by cutting off every expense, which serves only to indulge foolish desire: to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. Waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children. And then give all you can, or, in

other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half; but all that is God's, be it more or less: By employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship, when ye can be no longer stewards: In such a manner as the Oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts: In such a manner, that whatever ye do may be "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God;" and that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all his saints.

7. Brethren, can we be either wise or faithful stewards, unless we thus manage our Lord's goods? We cannot, as not only the Oracles of God, but our own conscience beareth witness. Then why should we delay? Why should we confer any longer with flesh and blood, or the men of the world? Our kingdom, our wisdom, is not of this world: Heathen custom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther than they are followers of Christ. Hear ye him: yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice. At this hour, and from this hour, do his will: Fulfil his word, in this and in all things. I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling. No more sloth! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. No more waste! Cut off every expense which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand. No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has entrusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, and in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, to all men. This is no small part of "the wisdom of the just:" Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him, who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son: So "laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life."

SERMON LIV.

ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW CHAPEL, CITY-ROAD, LONDON, APRIL 21, 1777.

NUMBERS xxiii. 23.

"*According to this time, it shall be said, What hath GOD wrought!*"

1. WE need not now enquire, in what sense this was applicable to the children of Israel. It may be of more use to consider in what sense the words are applicable to ourselves: how far the people of England have reason to say, "According to this time, what hath God wrought!"

2. A great man, indeed, who, I trust, is now in a better world, Dr. Gibson, late lord bishop of London, in one of his charges to his clergy, flatly denies, That God has wrought any "extraordinary work" in our nation: nay, affirms, that to imagine any such thing, is no better than downright enthusiasm. It is so, if his lordship's supposition is true, if God has not wrought any extraordinary work. But, if he really has, then we may believe and assert it, without incurring any such imputation.

3. Yet, a still greater man of a neighbouring nation, a burning and a shining light, equally eminent in piety and in learning, partly confirmed the bishop's supposition. For Bengelius being asked, Why he placed the grand revival

of religion so late as the year 1836, replied, "I acknowledge all the prophecies would incline me to place it a century sooner. But an insurmountable difficulty lies in the way: I cannot reconcile this to matter of fact. For I do not know of any remarkable work of God which has been wrought upon earth between the years 1730 and 1740." This is really surprising. It is strange, that sensible men should know so little of what is done at so small a distance. How could so great a man be ignorant of what was transacted no farther off than England? Especially considering the accounts then published in Germany, some of which were tolerably impartial: nay, considering the particular account which I had sent, as early as the year 1742, to one well known through all the empire, Pastor (afterwards Superintendant) Steinmetz.

4. "But has there, indeed, been any extraordinary work of God wrought in England during this century?" This is an important question; it is certainly worthy of our serious consideration. And it is capable of being answered to the full satisfaction of every fair enquirer. He may easily be informed, what work it is, and in what manner it has been wrought? It is true, I am in one respect an improper person to give this information; as it will oblige me frequently to speak of myself, which may have the appearance of ostentation. But, with regard to this, I can only cast myself upon the candour of my hearers, being persuaded they will put the most favourable construction upon what is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. For there is no other person, if I decline the task, who can supply my place, who has a perfect knowledge of the work in question, from the beginning of it to this day. We may consider, First, The rise and progress of this work: Secondly, The nature of it.

I. 1. As to the rise of it. In the year 1725, a young student at Oxford was much affected by reading Kempis's Christian Pattern, and Bishop Taylor's Rules of Holy Living and Dying. He found an earnest desire to live according to those rules, and to flee from the wrath to come.

He sought for some that would be his companions in the way, but could find none; so that, for several years, he was constrained to travel alone, having no man either to guide or to help him. But, in the year 1729, he found one who had the same desire. They then endeavoured to help each other, and, in the close of the year, were joined by two more. They soon agreed to spend two or three hours together every Sunday evening. Afterwards they met together two evenings, and, in a while, six evenings in the week: spending that time in reading the Scriptures, and provoking one another to love and to good works.

2. The regularity of their behaviour gave occasion to a young gentleman of the college to say, "I think we have got a new set of *Methodists:*" alluding to a set of physicians, who began to flourish at Rome about the time of Nero, and continued for several ages. The name was new and quaint: it clave to them immediately. And from that time, both those four young gentlemen, and all that had any religious connection with them, were distinguished by the name of *Methodists.*

3. In the four or five years following, another and another were added to the number, till, in the year 1735, there were fourteen of them who constantly met together. Three of these were Tutors in their several colleges; the rest, Bachelors of Arts, or Under-graduates. They were all precisely of one judgment, as well as of one soul. All tenacious of order to the last degree, and observant, for conscience' sake, of every rule of the church, and every statute, both of the university, and of their respective colleges. They were all orthodox in every point; firmly believing, not only the three creeds, but whatsoever they judged to be the doctrine of the Church of England, as contained in her Articles and Homilies. As to that practice of the apostolic church, (which continued till the time of Tertullian, at least in many churches,) the "having all things in common," they had no rule, nor any formed design concerning it. But it was so in effect, and it could not be otherwise; for none was suffered to want any thing that

another could spare. This was the infancy of the work. They had no conception of any thing that would follow. Indeed, they took "no thought for the morrow," desiring only to live "to-day."

4. Many imagined that little Society would be dispersed, and *Methodism* (so called) come to an end, when, in October, 1735, my brother, Mr. Ingham, and I, were induced, by a strange chain of providences, to go over to the new colony in Georgia. Our design was to preach to the Indian nations bordering upon that province. But we were detained at Savannah and Frederica, by the importunity of the people; who, having no other ministers, earnestly requested, that we would not leave them. After a time, I desired the most serious of them to meet me once or twice a week at my house. Here were the rudiments of a *Methodist* Society: but, notwithstanding this, both my Brother and I were as vehemently attached to the Church as ever, and to every rubric of it: insomuch that I would never admit a Dissenter to the Lord's-Supper, unless he would be re-baptized. Nay, when the Lutheran minister of the Saltzburghers at Ebenezer, being at Savannah, desired to receive it, I told him, I "did not dare to administer it to him, because I looked upon him as unbaptized; as I judged baptism by laymen to be invalid: and such I counted all that were not episcopally ordained."

5. Full of these sentiments, of this zeal for the Church, (from which, I bless God, he has now delivered me,) I returned to England in the beginning of February 1738. I was now in haste to retire to Oxford, and bury myself in my beloved obscurity. But I was detained in London, week after week, by the trustees for the colony of Georgia. In the mean time I was continually importuned to preach in one or another Church, and that not only morning, afternoon, and night, on Sundays, but on week-days also. As I was lately come from a far country, vast multitudes flocked together. But in a short time, partly because of those unwieldy crowds, partly because of my unfashionable doctrine, I was excluded from one and another Church,

and, at length, shut out of all. Not daring to be silent, after a short struggle between honour and conscience, I made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields. Here were thousands upon thousands, abundantly more than any Church could contain: and numbers among them, who never went to any church or place of public worship at all. More and more of them were cut to the heart, and came to me all in tears, enquiring, with the utmost eagerness, "what they must do to be saved?" I said, "If all of you will meet on Thursday evening, I will advise you as well as I can." The first evening about twelve persons came; the next week, thirty or forty. When they were increased to about an hundred, I took down their names and places of abode, intending, as often as it was convenient, to call upon them at their own houses. Thus, without any previous plan or design, began the *Methodist Society* in England, a company of people associating together, to help each other to work out their own salvation.

6. The next spring we were invited to Bristol and Kingswood, where, likewise, Societies were quickly formed. The year following we went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and preached to all the colliers and keelmen round it. In 1744 we went through Cornwall, as far as Sennan, near the Land's-End; and, in the compass of two or three years more, to almost every part of England. Some time after we were desired to go over to Ireland, and, in process of time, to every county therein. Last of all we were invited to Musselborough, Glasgow, and several other parts of Scotland. But it was in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Arbroth, and Aberdeen, that we saw the greatest fruit of our labour.

II. 1. Such was the rise, and such has been the progress of *Methodism*, from the beginning to the present time. But you will naturally ask, What is *Methodism?* What does this new word mean? Is it not a new religion? This is a very common, nay, almost an universal supposition; but nothing can be more remote from the truth. It is a mistake

all over. *Methodism*, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive church, the religion of the Church of England. This *old religion*, (as I observed in the Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,) is "no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved *us*, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth as our own soul. This love is the great medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God, and, at the same time, a peace that passeth all understanding, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul, but is ever shewing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but, likewise, in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it."

2. This is the "religion of the Bible," as no one can deny, who reads it with any attention. It is the religion which is continually inculcated therein, which runs through both the Old and New Testament. Moses and the Prophets, our Blessed Lord and his Apostles proclaim, with one voice, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself." The Bible declares, "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment, of all the commandments which are contained in the Oracles of God. The inward and outward fruits of this love are also largely described by the inspired writers; so that whoever allows the Scripture to be the Word of God, must allow this to be true Religion.

3. This is the "religion of the primitive church," of the whole church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius,

and Polycarp. It is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian. And even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius. It would be easy to produce a cloud of witnesses, testifying the same thing; were not this a point which no one will contest, who has the least acquaintance with Christian antiquity.

4. And this is the "religion of the Church of England," as appears from all her authentic records, from the uniform tenor of her Liturgy, and from numberless passages in her Homilies. The scriptural primitive religion of love, which is now reviving throughout the three kingdoms, is to be found in her Morning and Evening Service, and in her daily as well as occasional Prayers: and the whole of it is beautifully summed up in that one, comprehensive petition, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name."

5. Permit me to give a little fuller account, both of the progress and nature of this religion, by an extract from a treatise which was published many years ago*.

"Just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. Many thousands gathered together to hear them: and, in every place where they came, many began to shew such a concern for religion, as they never had done before. Many were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins, of their evil tempers, of their inability to help themselves, and of the insignificancy of their *outside religion*. And from this repentance sprung fruits meet for repentance: the whole form of their lives was changed. They "ceased to do evil, and learned to do well." Neither was this all; but over and above this outward change, they began to experience *inward religion*.

* Farther Appeal, Part III.

The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they enjoy to this day. They "love him, because he first loved us?" and this love constrains them to love all mankind, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, with the mind which was in Christ. Hence it is, that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all manner of conversation, and in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content. Thus they calmly travel on through life, never repining, or murmuring, or dissatisfied, till the hour comes, that they shall drop this covering of earth, and return to the Father of spirits."

6. This revival of religion has spread to "such a degree, as neither we nor our fathers had known. How *extensive* has it been! There is scarce a considerable town in the kingdom, where some have not been made witnesses of it. It has spread to every age and sex, to most orders and degrees of men: and even to abundance of those who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness.

"Consider the *swiftness* as well as extent of it. In what age has such a number of sinners been recovered in so short a time from the error of their ways! When has true religion, I will not say, since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe, hardly can either ancient or modern history afford a parallel instance.

7. "We may likewise observe the *depth* of the work so extensively and swiftly wrought. Multitudes have been throughly convinced of sin; and shortly after, so filled with joy and love, that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, they could hardly tell. And in the power of this love, they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable, having evidenced, in the severest trials, an invariable and tender good-will to mankind, and all the fruits of holiness. Now so deep a repentance, so strong a faith, such fervent love, and such unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons in so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages."

8. "No less remarkable is the *purity* of the religion which

has extended itself so deeply and swiftly: I speak particularly as to the doctrines held by those who are the subjects of it. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this. For where is there a body of people, who, number for number, so closely adhere to the doctrines of the church?"

"Nor is their religion more pure from *heresy*, than it is from *superstition*. In former times, wherever any unusual religious concern has appeared, there has sprung up with it a *zeal* for things that were no part of religion. But it has not been so in the present case: no stress has been laid on any thing, as though it were necessary to salvation, but what is plainly contained in the Word of God. And of the things contained therein, the stress laid on each has been in proportion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all; the love of God and our neighbour. So pure, both from superstition and error, is the religion which has lately spread in this nation."

9. "It is likewise *rational*. It is as pure from *enthusiasm* as from superstition. It is true, the contrary has been continually affirmed. But to affirm, is one thing; to prove, is another. Who will prove, that it is *enthusiasm* to love God? Yea, to love him with all our heart? Who is able to make good this charge, against the love of all mankind? (I do but just touch on the general heads.) But if you cannot make it good, own this religion to be sober, manly, rational, divine."

10. "It is also pure from *bigotry*. Those who hold it, are not bigotted to *opinions*. They would hold right opinions: but they are peculiarly cautious, not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such over-grown fondness for any opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians; or to confine their affection, or esteem, to those that agree with them therein. Nor are they bigotted to any particular branch even of practical religion. They are not attached to one point more than another; they aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing cir-

cumstantial, as if it were essential to religion, but for every thing in its own order.

11. "They dread that *bitter zeal*, that spirit of *persecution*, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. They do not approve of using any kind of violence, on any pretence, in matters of religion. They allow no method of bringing any to the knowledge of the truth, except the methods of reason and persuasion. And their practice is consistent with their profession. They do not, in fact, hinder their dependants from worshipping God, in every respect, according to their own conscience."

But if these things are so, may we not well say, "What hath God wrought!" For such a work, if we consider the *extensiveness* of it, the *swiftness* with which it has spread, the *depth* of the religion so swiftly diffused, and its *purity* from all corrupt mixtures, we must acknowledge, cannot easily be paralleled, in all these concurrent circumstances, by any thing that is found in the English annals, since Christianity was first planted in this island.

12. It may throw considerable light upon the nature of this work, to mention one circumstance more, attending the present revival of religion, which, I apprehend, is quite peculiar to it. I do not remember to have either seen, heard, or read of any thing parallel. It cannot be denied, that there have been several revivals of religion in England since the Reformation. But the generality of the English nation were little profited thereby: because they that were the subjects of those revivals, preachers as well as people, soon separated from the Established Church, and formed themselves into a distinct sect. So did the Presbyterians first, afterwards the Independents, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers. And after this was done, they did scarce any good, except to their own little body. As they chose to separate from the Church, so the people, remaining therein, separated from them, and generally contracted a prejudice against them. But these were immensely the greatest number: so that, by that unhappy separation, the hope of a general, national reformation was totally cut off.

13. But is it not so in the present revival of religion. The *Methodists* (so termed) know their calling. They weighed the matter at first, and, upon mature deliberation, determined to continue in the Church. Since that time, they have not wanted temptations of every kind to alter their resolution. They have heard abundance said upon the subject, perhaps all that can be said. They have read the writings of the most eminent pleaders for separation, both in the last and present century. They have spent several days in a general conference upon this very question, "Is it *expedient* (supposing, not granting that it is *lawful)* to separate from the Established Church?" But still they could see no sufficient cause to depart from their first resolution. So that their fixed purpose is, let the clergy or laity use them well or ill, by the grace of God, to endure all things, to hold on their even course, and to continue in the Church, maugre men or devils, unless God permits them to be thrust out.

14. Near twenty years ago, immediately after their solemn consultation on the subject, a clergyman, who had heard the whole, said, with great earnestness, "In the Name of God, let nothing move you to recede from this resolution. God is with you of a truth: and so he will be, while you continue in the Church. But whenever the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them." Lord, what is man! In a few months after, Mr. Ingham himself left the Church, and turned all the societies under his care into congregations of *Independents*. And what was the event? The same that he had foretold. They swiftly mouldered into nothing.

Some years after, a person of honour told me, "This is the peculiar glory of the Methodists. However convenient it might be, they will not, on any account or pretence whatever, form a distinct sect or party. Let no one rob you of this glorying." I trust, none will, as long as I live. But the giver of this advice entirely forgot in a very short time, and has, almost ever since, been labouring to form *Independent* congregations.

15. This has occasioned many to ask, "Why do you say, The *Methodists* form no distinct party? That they do not

leave the Church? Are there not thousands of Methodists who have, in fact, left the Church? Who never attend the Church-service? Never receive the Lord's Supper there? Nay, who speak against the Church, even with bitterness, both in public and private? Yea, who appoint and frequent meetings for divine service at the same hour? How then can you affirm, that the Methodists do not leave the Church?"

I am glad of so public an opportunity of explaining this: in order to which, it will be necessary to look back some years. The Methodists at Oxford were all one body, and, as it were, one soul; zealous for the religion of the Bible, of the primitive church, and in consequence, of the Church of England; as they believed, it came nearer the scriptural and primitive plan, than any other national Church upon earth.

When my brother and I returned from Georgia, we were in the same sentiments. And at that time, we and our friends were the only persons to whom that innocent name was affixed. Thus far, therefore, all the Methodists were firm to the Church of England.

16. But a good man, who met with us when we were at Oxford, while he was absent from us, conversed much with Dissenters, and contracted strong prejudices against the Church; I mean Mr. Whitefield: and not long after, he totally separated from *us*. In some years, William Cudworth and several others separated from him, and turned *Independents:* as did Mr. Maxfield and a few more, after separating from us. Lastly, a school was set up near Trevecka, in Wales: and almost all who were educated there, (except those that were ordained, and some of them too,) as they disclaimed all connexion with the Methodists, so they disclaimed the Church also. Nay, they spoke of it, upon all occasions, with exquisite bitterness and contempt.

Now let every impartial person judge, whether we are accountable for any of these! None of these have any manner of connexion with the original Methodists. They are

branches broken off from the tree; if they break from the Church also, we are not accountable for it.

These, therefore, cannot make our glorying void, That we do not, will not form any separate sect, but from principle remain, what we always have been, true members of the Church of England.

17. Brethren, I presume, the greater part of you also are members of the Church of England. So at least you are called: but you are not so indeed, unless you are witnesses of the religion above described. And are you really such? Judge not one another; but every man look into his own bosom. How stands the matter in your own breast? Examine your conscience before God. Are you a happy partaker of this scriptural, this truly primitive religion? Are you a witness of the religion of love? Are you a lover of God and all mankind? Does your heart glow with gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift? The Father of the spirits of all flesh, who giveth you life, and breath, and all things? Who hath given you his Son, his only Son, that you "might not perish, but have everlasting life." Is your soul warm with benevolence to all mankind? Do you long to have all men virtuous and happy? And does the constant tenor of your life and conversation bear witness of this? Do you "love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth?" Do you persevere in the "work of faith, and the labour of love?" Do you "walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us?" Do you, as you have time, "do good unto all men?" And in as high a degree as you are able? *Whosoever* thus "doeth the Will of my Father which is in heaven," said Jesus, "the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Whosoever thou art, whose heart is herein as my heart, give me thine hand. Come, and let us magnify the Lord together, and labour to promote his kingdom upon earth. Let us join hearts and hands in this blessed work, in striving to bring glory to God in the highest, by establishing peace and good-will among men, to the uttermost of our power. First, let our hearts be joined herein: let us unite our wishes and prayers: let

our whole soul pant after a general revival of pure religion and undefiled, the restoration of the image of God, pure love, in every child of man. Then let us endeavour to promote, in our several stations, this scriptural, primitive religion: let us, with all diligence, diffuse the religion of love among all we have any intercourse with: let us provoke all men, not to enmity and contention, but to love and good works: always remembering those deep words, (God engrave them on all our hearts!) "God is love: and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him!"

SERMON LV.

ON FREE GRACE.

ROMANS VIII. 32.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

1. HOW freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, "Christ died for the ungodly." While we were "dead in sin, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." And how "freely with him does he give us all things." Verily, *Free Grace* is all in all!

2. The Grace or Love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all.

3. First: It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not, in any wise, depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver: not on any thing he has done, or any thing he is. It does not depend on his endeavours. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions. For all these flow from the free grace of God: they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not

the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all, that is, no way depending on any power, or merit in man; but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and "with him freely giveth us all things."

4. But is it free for all, as well as in all? To this some have answered, "No: It is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and, therefore, before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed, because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly they are born for this, To be destroyed, body and soul, in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption. For what grace God gives, he gives only for this, 'To increase, not to prevent their damnation.'"

5. This is that decree of Predestination. But methinks I hear one say, "This is not the predestination which I hold. I hold only, The Election of Grace. What I believe is no more than this, That God, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men, to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Now all these will be saved, and none else. For the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves. So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and waxing worse and worse, are, at length, justly punished with everlasting destruction.

6. Is this all the Predestination which you hold? Consider. Perhaps this is not all. Do you not believe, "God ordained them to this very thing?" If so, you believe the whole decree; you hold Predestination in the full sense, which has been above described. But it may be, you think you do not. Do not you then believe, that God hardens the hearts of them that perish? Do not you believe, He (literally) hardened Pharoah's heart, and that for this end

he raised him up (or created him?) Why this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any other man upon earth, was created for this end, to be damned, you hold all that has been said of Predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his decree, which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those vessels of wrath, whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. Well; but it may be, you do not believe even this. You do not hold any decree of reprobation. You do not think God decrees any man to be damned, nor hardens, nor irresistibly fits him for damnation. You only say, "God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, LIVE, and to others he would not. That consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death: these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction."

8. Is not this what you mean by *the election of grace?* If it be, I would ask one or two questions. Are any who are not thus elected, saved? Or, were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved, unless he be thus elected? If you say, *no*, you are but where you were. You are not got one hair's breadth farther. You still believe that in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption: inasmuch as none can save them but God: and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed, not to save them and what is this, but decreeing to damn them? It is, in effect, neither more nor less: it comes to the same thing. For if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive; then if God has absolutely decreed, he will make only others alive, and not you; he hath absolutely decreed your everlasting death; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, tho' you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing. And God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your own account of it,

amounts to neither more nor less, than what others call, "God's decree of reprobation."

9. Call it, therefore, by whatever name you please, "Election, Preterition, Predestination, or Reprobation," it comes, in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, "By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible, decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned: it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved."

10. But if this be so, then all preaching is vain. It is needless to them that are elected. For they, whether with preaching or without will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching, "To save souls," is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved. They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is, therefore, void with regard to them likewise, so that, in either case, our preaching is vain, as your hearing is also vain.

11. This then is a plain proof, that the doctrine of Predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God; and God is not divided against himself. A second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness, which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, "None who hold it are holy." (For God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind.) But that the doctrine itself, "That every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned," has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general. For it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven and fear of hell. That "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal," is no motive to him to struggle for life, who believes his lot is cast already: it is not reasonable for him so to do, if he thinks he is un-

alterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then? This helps not the matter. For if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is not reasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live; if to death, I shall die: so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. As directly does this doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love: love, I mean, of our enemies, of the evil and unthankful. I say not, that none who hold it, have meekness and love: (for as is the power of God, so is his mercy.) But that it naturally tends to inspire or increase a sharpness or eagerness of temper which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ, as then especially appears when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose outcasts from God. "O," but you say, "I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean, you would not, if you could help it. You cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons. The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. "But you rejected the thought with abhorrence." True; as soon as you could. But how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the mean time! You well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt towards that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or not, to have been hated of God from eternity.

13. Thirdly: This doctrine tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them. They afford them no ray of

comfort: "for they are not the elect of God, therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them." This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness, even in that religion, whose ways were designed to be "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

14. And as to you, who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hope, not a notion, a speculative belief; a bare opinion of any kind: but a feeling possession of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; or "The witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God." This, otherwise termed, "the full assurance of faith," is the true ground of a christian's happiness. And it does indeed imply, a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply, a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say, this is never joined to it: but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one, who have not the other.

15. Now this witness of the Spirit, experience shews, to be much obstructed by this doctrine: and not only in those, who, believing themselves reprobated, by this belief, have thrust it far from them: but even in them that have "tasted of that good gift," who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubts, and fears, and darkness, *horrible darkness* that might be *felt*. And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your election or perseverance? If you ask, Who has not? I answer, very few of those that hold this doctrine. But many, very many of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth; many of those who know and feel they are in Christ to-day, and "take no thought for the morrow;" who "abide in him" by faith from hour to hour, or rather, from moment to moment; many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy, excludes all doubt and fear. It excludes all kinds of doubt and fear concerning their future perseverance: though it is not properly, as was said before, an assurance of what is future; but only of what *now* is. And this needs not for its support, a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life, must live. But it is wrought from hour to hour, by the mighty power of God, "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And, therefore, that doctrine is not of God, because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of christianity.

17. Again: How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings! How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ! To those, who, being filled with "bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion," could even "wish themselves accursed for their brethren's sake!"

18. Fourthly: This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, first, as it naturally tends to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, viz. the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love, must so far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, viz. the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants, who are just dropping into eternal fire? 'Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire.' Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. You believe it is the will of God they should die. And "who hath resisted his will?" But you say, "you do not know, whether these are elected or not." What then? If you know they are one or the other, that they are either elected, or not elected, all your labour is void and vain. In either case, your advice, reproof, or exhort-

ation, is as needless and useless as our poaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with, or without it, they will infallibly be damned. Therefore, you cannot, consistently with your principles, take any pains about their salvation. Consequently those principles directly tend to destroy your zeal for good works: for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, fifthly, This doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labour to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once shew this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, "If it be not necessary, it is not true." Now this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being: and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation: and what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. "O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice," lest the sons of unbelief triumph!

20. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that Revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or less it matters not), as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance, the assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God, in a literal sense, hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than

this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts, which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again, they infer from that text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," (Rom. ix. 15,) that God is love only to some men, viz. the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only; flatly contrary to which is the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto *every* man, and his mercy is over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. Again, they infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, neither of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," that he sheweth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. *Nay*, but *who replieth against God* now? You now contradict the whole Oracles of God, which declare thoughout, "God is no respecter of persons," (Acts x. 34.) "There is no respect of persons with him," (Rom. ii. 11.) Again from that text, "The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.—It was said unto her," (unto Rebecca,) "the elder shall serve the younger:" you infer that our being predestinated or elect, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God; flatly contrary to this are all the scriptures; and those in particular, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," 1 Pet. 1, 2. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," Rom. viii. 29.

21. The Apostle declares, "The same Lord over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12. But you say, "No, he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, 'whom God hath chosen out of the world;' for he died not for all, but only for those 'who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 2. Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these scriptures also is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are, in particular, those texts, "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15. A clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are

saved, but also for them that perish. He is "the Saviour of the world," John iv. 42. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29. "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 2 John ii. 1. "He," (the living God) "is the Saviour of men," 1 Tim. iv. 10. "He gave himself a ransom for all," 2 Tim. ii. 6. "He tasted death for all men," Heb. ii. 9.

22. If you ask, "Why then are not all men saved?" The whole law and the testimony answer, first, not because of any decree of God, not because it is his pleasure they should die. For, "as I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," Ezek. xviii. 32. Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his Will, if the Oracles of God are true: for they declare, "He is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9. "He willeth that all men should be saved:" And they, secondly, declare, what is the cause why all men are not saved; namely, that they will not be saved: so our Lord expressly says, "They will not come unto me that they may have life," John v. 40. "The power of the Lord is present to heal them," but they will not be healed. "They reject the counsel," the merciful counsel of God "*against themselves*," as did their stiff-necked forefathers; and therefore are they without excuse, because God would save them, but they will not be saved: this is the condemnation, "How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37.

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, by making it contradict itself: by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly contradicts all the other texts; and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture: an abundant proof that it is not of God. But neither is this all; for, seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honour of our gracious God, and the cause of truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God then, and from a sincere concern for the

glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But, first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me, as some have done, with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others. And the more you are grieved with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye "confirm your love towards them" the more, and that your heart's desire, and continual prayer to God be, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

24. This premised, let it be observed, that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord, "Jesus Christ the righteous, the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity: For it cannot be denied, that he every where speaks, as if he were willing that all men should be saved. Therefore to say "he was not willing that all men should be saved," is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gracious words which came out of his mouth, are full of invitations to all sinners. To say then, He did not *intend* to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If then you say he calls those that cannot come, those whom he knows to be unable to come, those whom he can make able to come but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying one thing and meaning another: as pretending the love which he had not. Him in "whose mouth was no guile," you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity: then especially, when drawing nigh the city, "He wept over it, and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together—and ye would not." (ηθελησα και ουκ ηθελησατε·) Now if you say, *they would*, but *he would not*,

you represent him, (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodile's tears, over the prey which he himself had doomed to destruction.

25. Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle. But there is yet more behind; for just as it honours the Son, so doth this doctrine honour the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once. It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth. Yes, it represents the Most Holy God as worse than the devil: as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false, because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, "He willeth all men to be saved." More unjust, because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say, that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace, *he will not* give them, they cannot avoid: and more cruel, because that unhappy spirit "seeketh rest and findeth none;" so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God "resteth in his high and holy place:" so that to suppose him out of his mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures whether they will or not, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him, as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the Most High God, ("he that hath ears to ear, let him hear!") as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!!

26. This is the blasphemy clearly contained in *the horrible decree* of predestination. And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every asserter of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say, you "will prove it by Scripture." Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? That God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never proves this. Whatever be its true meaning, it cannot mean this. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, "I know not," you

have gained nothing. For there are many scriptures, the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know, till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say, it had no sense at all, than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean beside, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works: that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove Predestination.

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it,) I abhor the doctrine of Predestination: a doctrine upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing) one might say to our adversary the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not, that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands, and that he doth it more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, can only so assault that we may resist thee. But he can, irresistibly, destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice: but his unchangeable decree, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; he forceth us to be damned: for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men? Moloch caused only children to pass through the fire; and that fire was soon quenched: or the corruptible body being consumed, its torments were at an end. But God, thou art told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes not only *children of a span long*, but the parents also to pass through the fire of hell: that "fire which never shall be quenched;" and the body which is cast thereinto, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming and never consumed: but

'the smoke of their torment,' because it is God's good pleasure, 'ascendeth up for ever.'"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud, and spare not! How would he lift up his voice, and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish. But whither will ye flee?—Into heaven? He is there.—Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven his throne, and earth his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof. Here, O death, is thy sting! They shall not, cannot escape. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave, is thy victory! Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil, are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever. Let all those morning-stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning. Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yes, the decree is past. And so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men, life and death, blessing and cursing." And "the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree, whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting: this, whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive, are "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven: and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away, for it is as unchangeable and eternal, as the being of God that gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works, and in all holiness:

and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God. It is, every way, consistent with the perfections of his nature. It gives us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian Revelation, as well as all the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his apostles. Thus Moses, in the name of his Lord, "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." Thus Ezekiel, (to cite one prophet for all) "The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall not bear [eternally] the iniquity of the father, (xviii. 20.) The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Thus our blessed Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii. 37. (Thus his great Apostle, St. Paul) Acts xvii. 30, "God commandeth all men, every where, to repent." "All men, every where:" every man in every place, without any exception, either of place or person. Thus St. James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i. 5. Thus St. Peter, "The Lord is—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9. And thus St. John, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father:—and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 1, 2.

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! ye cannot charge your death upon him. "Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God? (Ezek. xviii. 23, &c.) Repent, and turn from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed,—for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Where-

fore, turn yourselves, and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.—Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Ezek. xxviii. 11.

END OF VOL. EIGHT.

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JL